

how am i supposed to hate you

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how am i supposed to hate you

by [aloffie](#)

Summary

To George, Dream is one of the most obnoxious and stuck up people he's ever met.

To Dream, George is one of the most whiny and stubborn people he's ever met.

Both of them, forced to compromise by their club director in order to compete in this year's coding competition, are at even greater odds. Yet, after a strange night at Greenview High's Homecoming dance, the two start to think a little differently about one another.

Notes

This entire fic is based on online personas. If anyone in this states they are uncomfortable with this sort of content it will be taken down immediately.

Please remember that online personas can be completely different from the actual person in question.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ticking as seconds passed, the clock's hands moved at what seemed to be a snail's pace.

"Ok pencils down, time's up," Ms. Davis said, tapping on her centuries old watch. "Pass your papers up to the front of the room. No editing or marking answers."

The rustle of papers filled the room and eventually they were all collected in her hands. As if on cue, the bell rang, signaling for the freedom of her students. She tried to squeeze in a farewell and a reminder for next week's homework, but her words were drowned out by the bustle of rushing students out the door.

All that was left were two people, both sitting in their desks patiently.

"I need to get a drink from the teacher's lounge. You two can go ahead and start without me," She said dismissively as she walked out the door.

As soon as the door swung closed, the two of them dove for their backpacks.

"Ok Clay, so as we agreed last week, we'll be starting on developing ideas for the CodeWorld League competition. Right?" said one of the two, rushing to pull out papers from his bag.

"Yeah that's right George," Clay responded as he did the same, rustling through binders and folders in his backpack.

Pulling out a thick stack of papers, George walked over and dropped it on the front desk of the classroom triumphantly. "So as you can see, this right here," He said as he motioned at the papers, "are the possible ideas I've created for this year's challenge. One of which, we'll definitely be using."

A pause. "Woah, woah woah," Clay stood up, holding a manila folder. "Who said we'd be using your ideas for this year's competition?"

"Ah, well I went ahead and took the liberty of making some since *someone's* plan was quickly shot down in the first wave last year," George coughed into his hand.

Clay walked up to the front of the classroom, stiffly taking a deep breath. "It wasn't a bad concept. *Someone* was just too inept to fully grasp the ideas I put out," He deadpanned straight at George. "Luckily, I *also* took the liberty of making some possible plans for this year. One of which I think we'll definitely be using." He flicked the folder with a confident grin.

A third party spoke up, opening the door. "Mind you two, this is a team effort. Not something you can do or enter alone," Ms. Davis spoke, now with a newly acquired cup of sweet tea.

The two of them pursed their lips, both thinking the exact opposite of Ms. Davis' words.

George spoke up first, "Ms. Davis, if you'll just look--"

"Now hold on," She put her hand up at George, stopping him from going further. "We have to set some ground rules this year. I am not about to spend another four months listening to you two

bicker for 75% of the time here, only to complete the projects at home *individually*.” Ms. Davis glared at the two of them.

She walked over to her desk, staring both the boys in the eyes. “We only managed to compete last year after some extremely last minute decisions and through sheer willpower. I don’t want a repeat of that,” She said, taking a sip of her tea. “You two need to compromise and rightfully settle on a plan. Both of you are stubborn,” Clay and George tensed up as if to deny it, “and need to accept whatever we decide as a team.”

Clay spoke up first. “Ms. Davis, I think my ideas are really going to go somewhere this year.”

“And he,” Ms. Davis responded, pointing at George, “most likely thinks the same about his own plans.”

“We think on two different wavelengths Ms. Davis. Talking to Clay about my plans is like talking to a brick wall,” said George exasperatedly. Clay turned to George to start on a comeback.

“Look, last year-”

“I don’t even want to-”

Ms. Davis suddenly interjected, the two at each other’s throats, “So then you just shouldn’t!”

Both turned in confusion. “What?” they said simultaneously.

“My god, why didn’t I think about this before,” muttered Ms. Davis, briskly walking over to the desk with George’s papers. “Just don’t talk to each other about your plans!”

“For the next 2 weeks you boys are going to swap papers. Neither of you ever really look into what the other person is trying to do. It’s always just you two squabbling about the worst things the other person has to offer. So, to remedy this I’m requiring you two to swap papers.”

The two were dumbfounded. The idea sounded absurd.

“Ms. Davis this is abso-” Clay began.

“At the end of each week, you’ll give each other constructive criticism and find at least one possible good thing about each other’s concepts,” She interjected, clasping her hands together. “And by constructive, I mean *actual* constructive criticism.”

The two boys glanced at one another, and then at the papers. “No ‘but’s or ‘no’s’, I am requiring you two to do this. If not,” She gave a smile to the two, “I’ll be pulling us out of the competition.”

Both Clay and George whipped their heads around. George gaped, “Wait, Ms. Davis that’s crazy you can’t-”

“What did I say? You boys are the only two in this club anyways and the only ones competing in this competition from this school. Pulling us out of this isn’t going to be doing any harm to anyone but yourselves.”

They hesitantly glanced at the papers once more.

“So, what’ll it be boys? Take it or leave it,” Ms. Davis motioned at the papers, sipping at her tea in her other hand.

Reluctantly, George grabbed his packet from the table. Slowly, they swapped, holding the other’s

packed plans with great disinterest.

“Great!” Ms. Davis clapped her hands together. “Now I believe our time here is over. I expect some good feedback when you two come back next week! That is, if you want to keep competing.”

Grabbing their bags on the way out they said chaste goodbyes to Ms. Davis, stuffing the papers into their bags. Both of them refused to make eye contact as they broke out into a speedy walk to the school parking lot and parted ways wordlessly as they left for their respective cars.

George walked over to Badboyhalo, a good friend of his and a neighbor who lived relatively close by, and stood still as he waited for Bad to open the doors to his car. With George on the brink of his composure breaking, Bad briskly unlocked the car and got into the driver's seat.

“So, what is it this time?” Bad asked, putting down his backpack in the second row.

Not a moment later, George loudly groaned into his hands. “I’ll wipe that stupid smirk straight off his face. Ms. Davis making this decision was one of the stupidest things I’ve had to deal with all week. My plans are going to work, 100% and I know it. Every year Clay never looks at my plans at all. He’s always so cocky about it and this year I will wipe that stupid smirk off of his face.”

Bad simply nodded, buckling his seatbelt and motioning for George to do the same. It became routine for them whenever George went home with Bad for George to just go off about whatever blood-boiling incident happened, with Bad patiently listening to him. Backing out of his parking spot, Bad carefully looked over his shoulder for any reckless high schoolers that could’ve been walking by.

As he drove out the lot, George let out his frustrations in strained tones and curses. Bad simply listened, corrected George’s occasional bad language, and made sure to drive the two safely back to their homes.

At the same time that George got into Bad’s car, Clay was meeting up with a friend of his. That friend was Nick, Clay’s childhood friend and an absolute class clown. Out of habit, the two referred to each other using nicknames: Sapnap and Dream.

“My god dude, I was wondering when you were gonna get here. My grandpa could probably have gotten here faster than you did,” said Sapnap, playfully rolling his eyes.

Clay passed him silently, composure stiff as he unlocked his car. Quickly chasing after him, Sapnap slid into the passenger seat, tossing his backpack into the second row.

“You’re not even gonna say anything back to me? Rude,” Sapnap pouted, feigning that he took offense to the lack of remarks.

Starting up the car, Clay simply scoffed as he started up the car. “Not in the mood right now.” The rest of the drive was silent after that.

A few days later, George was sitting in his room doing physics homework, swiftly working through unnecessary amounts of assignments as the sun slowly set.

Taking a break, he glanced at the manilla folder that was perched on the corner of his desk.

Slowly reaching out to take a look at it, he pulled back quickly before he could get to it. For some

reason, he couldn't bring himself to actually open the folder for the life of him. It wouldn't hurt to take a look at it, he supposed. Yet, the thought of having to read plans by - the obnoxious, aggravating, cocky - Clay made him agitated. Taking another glance at it, he sighed and left his room to get some water.

George's mother was in the dining room, scrolling through emails and announcements as her soup cooled slowly in front of her.

Looking up, she motioned for him to come over to the table. "Oh, hey George!"

Grabbing a cup from the cupboards, George answered, "What is it mum?"

"Your homecoming dance is coming up soon!" she said excitedly, showing George the tacky PNG of the poster for the dance.

As he looked at it, he took small sips of water. "What about it? I don't really go to that sort of stuff."

He wasn't lying. Although he didn't find the appeal of going to school events like the homecoming dance, it was mainly because of his lack of friends after he transferred in 8th grade. Even so, he didn't mind not going, as he'd rather spend his night playing video games or just finishing more of the overbearing homework his teachers pushed onto him.

His mother gave a small pout. "Come on now, you skip things like this every year. You know enough people to have fun if you go by now!"

"Thank you, but it's fine, really," he said simply, walking back towards his room. Turning back, George saw his mother's slightly disappointed face. He put on a slight smile. "I'll be fine not going another year."

George's mother stared for a moment, concern written across her face, and then sighed, going back to the dining table, "If you say so, but if you ever change your mind don't be afraid to tell me."

He nodded and smiled warmly in response, knowing that this was another night that would be spent doing anything else but going to the dance.

Sapnap and Clay walked to their first class together, quietly travelling through the bustling groups of students around them. Random girls would stop and look at Clay and he'd simply wave and smile, not knowing at all who they were.

"Look at you, Mr. Popular Dream getting all the ladies to homecoming," Sapnap teased, shouldering Clay as they walked.

"Oh shut up dude," Clay rolled his eyes.

Walking over to and opening his locker, Clay found about six folded pieces of notebook paper sitting atop his thick textbooks. Sapnap raised his eyebrows, earning a quick kick in the shins. "You know I'm not doing *this*," Clay motioned towards the letters.

Sapnap knew Clay wasn't the type to get involved, or even want to get involved, with random girls he never talked to, much less go to a dance with them. Homecoming was meant for someone special, or it was meant for at least a good friend in Clay's eyes; It wasn't meant for some classmate that you spoke to once while passing out papers. He received a good handful of invitations each year and never accepted any of the offers. Basically, Clay planned on passing homecoming, again.

Sapnap simply sighed as he, too, opened his locker. "So, what are you gonna do with them this year?" Nodding his chin at the slips of paper.

"I-I'm not sure. It's kinda mean to not respond," guilt twinged Clay's voice. He hated having to deal with these types of situations. Too uncomfortable with hurting a stranger, yet too distant to accept their offers. "I'll just do what I did last year."

Upon pulling out unnecessary folders for his next few classes, Clay dug out George's thick packet of ideas for the upcoming competition. He still hadn't gotten around to reading it, and, as much as he wanted to swallow his pride and get it over with, he knew George probably hadn't read his either. Pursing his lips bitterly, Clay shoved the packet into the back of his backpack.

Was George even reading his packet? It would be such an asshole move to not go over his ideas, especially with their entry hinging on whether or not the two of them could compromise. Then again, Clay wasn't reading George's suggestions either. Yet-

"Dream, Dream, DREAM!" Sapnap yelled into Clay's ear, interrupting his chain of thought.

Before Clay could respond, a note formed out of pink cardstock was shoved into his face. Sapnap just nudged it into his face, waiting for him to take the note and read it. Clay took it reluctantly, opening the thick folded paper. In neat handwriting were the words, *Meet me at the corner by the football fields at 4:15*. Underneath it was scrawled the signature of someone that Clay didn't recognize.

Looking up, Clay could see Sapnap brimming with excitement.

"You're going," said Sapnap simply, a grin stretching across his face.

Clay was taken aback. "Going to what?" He said confusedly.

"To homecoming, duh."

Clay just blinked a few times in response. "You don't even know if this girl-" He squinted at the signature. "-I don't know what that even says."

"Sarah."

"Okay, Sarah," Clay reiterated, "We don't even know if this girl is actually asking you to go to homecoming."

Sapnap rolled his eyes, snatching the paper back and holding it to his heart like some love stricken school girl. "Assuming by the papers in your locker and cliché coming-of-age highschool movies, she's probably asking me to homecoming," Sapnap grinned while getting the last of his papers from his locker.

"Yeah, Yeah, as if," Clay wheezed.

"Dude, as much you hate to admit it, I'm extremely dashing and handsome," Sapnap grinned, dramatically flipping a strand of free hair.

Only another wheeze was said in response.

"Fine, be like that dude. She's gonna ask me out to homecoming," snapped Sapnap.

"Is that a bet?" Clay looked over at him.

“If she asks me to the dance, I’ll text you a ‘1’ after school,” Ssnap responded, smirking.

Clay doubled over laughing. “What, are you like some telemarketer?”

“Get prepared to come with me as my wingman,” Ssnap said confidently.

Clay just scoffed in response. “Yeah right.”

“Be ready for that ‘1’ after school,” Ssnap reminded him, walking off to his class.

After shutting his locker closed, Clay just rolled his eyes.

That afternoon, a small ding grabbed Clay’s attention, and he pulled out his phone.

4:21 P.M.

Ssnap: 1

4:21 P.M.

Ssnap: get ready bitch ur coming to hoco this year

After rereading the single digit, Clay just flopped onto his sofa, staring at the ceiling.

A feeling of annoyance bubbled in his chest at the thought of going to the homecoming dance. He wasn't going to enjoy it.

Chapter End Notes

thank you for reading!! any comments or criticisms are appreciated :>

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

In an attempt to avoid the work Ms. Davis set them to do, they both unknowingly end up escaping to homecoming.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Ok students, don’t forget to read chapters 8 and 9 for class on Thursday. I expect at least 3 paragraphs analyzing both chapters.”

After a grumble of “Yes’s” came from the students, a familiar metallic ring sounded and they quickly left, leaving behind various bits of trash and other materials.

“My god, Mr. Hubert really doesn’t know how to let up on us. I have better things to do than give him an analysis on every single word in this stupid book,” groaned Sapnap, shifting his backpack on his shoulder.

Clay didn’t respond, walking silently alongside Sapnap deep in thought. It had been a week since Ms. Davis told him and Clay to actually look into the packets. She was insane if she thought that was actually going to happen. The thick, stapled papers still sat unread in Clay’s backpack, and they were going to stay that way.

Mumbling a goodbye to Sapnap, Clay broke off from the stream of students walking towards the exit of the school.

Hopefully Ms. Davis would just let them both off the hook. In his opinion, the idea of making them both compromise in the first place was absurd. He wasn’t being stupid, just reasonable. Any ideas he came up with would work, yet developing it never went well with a teammate, much less one that pushed against any suggestions he made. He just wished he could work alone.

Entering Ms. Davis’ classroom, Clay was pleasantly greeted with the sight of George, standing at her desk, being berated by Ms. Davis, who looked both disappointed and tired. Only upon listening to the conversation did Clay realize he was going to get told off the exact same way, and his slight grin dropped just as quickly as it came.

“Oh good, Clay you’re here,” Ms. Davis stood up beckoning for him to come over to where George was standing.

Once Clay stood next to George, George simply looked away, unwilling to make eye contact.

“So, Clay, what thoughts do you have so far on George’s plans for this year’s project?” Ms. Davis asked, clearly expecting an answer.

In response, all he did was tense up, looking down the same way George did. The fabric on his sneakers were starting to show some wear. Clay should really get new shoes.

Ms. Davis gave a heavy sigh, thick with disappointment and slight annoyance. The realization that

neither of them analyzed the other's plans was frustrating. "You two do realize that if neither of you put in the effort to be a team player that we won't be entering this year's competition, right?"

George opened his mouth to speak, but he closed it quickly after.

Ms. Davis took a seat, leaning back and taking a long drink of freshly made coffee.

The three of them just sat in deafening silence. The only sound that filled the air was the ticking of the clock on the wall.

Another sigh from Ms. Davis broke the tense air. "I don't have much to say. I'm just disappointed."

Clay felt as if he was being scolded by his mom in the way that bored a hole of guilt into his gut.

"I did give you both two weeks to find a way to work together," She rubbed her temples as she spoke.

A pause. She contemplated. "Both of you technically have one more week. I understand that this week is homecoming and one of you may be busy, but if neither of you can be the bigger person and just look at what the other person has to say, I'll be pulling us out of the competition."

All they could do was nod. Neither of them could object.

"I suppose there isn't much else to talk about, so I guess that's it for today."

Before they could reach the door as they walked out, Ms. Davis spoke again. Slowly setting down her coffee cup, she took a deep breath. "Both of you are two of the smartest and most driven students in this entire school," she told the two. "Please take into account your pride and reflect on yourself over this next week."

Clay and George left the classroom without a single word.

Come Friday, George still hadn't even touched Clay's manila folder. Ever since Ms. Davis' scolding on Monday, George had felt stuck about the whole situation. He loved coding and coming up with all sorts of ideas that could be executed. Yet, the thought of having to review Clay's ideas, of all people, just felt upsetting.

Childish. It was a word that had been sitting in his thoughts for a while. His eyes flicked over to the folder.

It was like a lump was stuck in his throat. Feelings of guilt had been building up over the week, but he kept on swallowing them down. That strange feeling of mixed, negative emotions would go away if he just forgot about the whole situation. Yet, he only had 3 more days until their next club meeting, and he currently had nothing to show for the generosity Ms. Davis gave them.

You're afraid of what you'll see in that folder, aren't you? You're afraid that the work he's made is better than yours. You're being stubborn right now.

George got up and walked out of his room. He wanted to get away from his thoughts and that stupid manila folder. As soon as he left his bedroom, the doorbell rang and a familiar voice piped up from the entrance of his house.

"Ah, hello George's mom! Could I talk to George for a second?"

Oh, it was Bad.

George walked over to the door and saw Bad dressed up in a black suit. In his vest pocket was a teal colored rose.

“Hey Bad. What’s up?” George wondered.

“Ah, George! I was just about to call you out here,” George’s mom exclaimed, letting him get in the front of the doorway. She waved off to Bad and then left the two to talk.

Once George’s mom was gone, Bad started to speak again. “What do you mean, ‘What’s up?’ Can’t you tell?”

Scanning Bad’s outfit again, the thought came to George. He gave a small snap with his fingers, “The homecoming dance is tonight isn’t it?”

“Gosh, you’re such a muffinhead sometimes George,” Bad huffed out. “Anyways, I have an extra ticket to the dance and I thought that you might wanna come.” Shuffling around in his pockets, Bad pulled out a small red slip.

George quickly shook his head. “Thanks for the offer, but I think I’ll pass this year,” he declined, waving his hands in front of him.

“Why do you have an extra ticket anyways? You didn’t buy one just for me now did you?” George questioned. It would be really bad if Bad had actually bought him a ticket and George wasted his money like that.

A small blush crept up Bad’s face. “Well, someone else bought a ticket for me without me knowing, since the couples tickets are cheaper.”

George’s eyebrows raised and he put on a sly grin. Nudging Bad in the arm, George asked, “Who is this certain someone? Is it someone I know?”

Bad’s face, now fully flushed, quickly scrunched up. “I mean, you might know him, but - Hey, wait, this isn’t about me!” He said, quickly changing the subject. “I’m talking about whether or not *you* would want to go to the dance.”

Before George could turn down the offer again, his mother quickly interjected. “He would love to!”

Quickly whipping his head around, George realized his mother overheard them talking. “Wait Bad, could you give us a second?” George asked as he shuffled his mom away.

Bad nodded as the two went into the living room, leaving the door cracked open.

“Mum, I am not going to the dance. I thought I already told you this,” said George.

“Oh come on George! Bad has an extra ticket and you should go. There isn’t any reason as to why you shouldn’t,” She told him.

George just groaned in response.

“You finished all your homework for this weekend, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And you plan on spending tonight just playing video games, right?”

A pause. "Yes."

"So like I said, there isn't any reason as to why you shouldn't go!" She clapped her hands together excitedly.

"But....," George trailed off. As he thought of excuses, they all led back to the manila folder: The very godforsaken manila folder that would stare him down for the rest of the night. He let out a strained sigh.

Walking over to the door, George stuck his hand out for the ticket. "I'm going."

It wasn't like he had anything better to do.

That was a lie. George could've done absolutely anything and everything that would've been better than going to the dance.

After Bad's invitation, George threw on one of his older suits he had laying around in his closet in the short time he was allowed to get ready. Sure his white dress shirt had a few crinkles and he lacked a tie, but he looked decent nonetheless. Soon after, Bad drove the two of them to the dance.

Originally, George's plan was to stick with Bad, get the "highschool experience" of homecoming, and then leave at a reasonable enough hour to go back home and play video games. Yet, as soon as he gave his ticket to one of the teachers at the door and walked in, Bad and a guy - who George thinks is named Skeppy - began talking to one another, leaving George out of the loop. In hindsight George should've realized that he would third wheel all night, but the idea of having to face Clay's proposed plans for the competition seemed much less inviting at the time.

That lack of thought led him to where he was now, sipping on a disgustingly sugary cup of punch and listening to Bad and Skeppy talk. As much as Bad tried to include George in on the conversation, it was obvious that he was the most disconnected of the three.

Eventually, George couldn't take it anymore.

Quietly, he tapped Bad on the shoulder. "Hey, I'm gonna step out for some fresh air."

Bad just gave him a quick nod and then continued to talk to Skeppy again.

George was thankful for his own timing, since a song for a slow dance came on right as he snuck through the back door of the gym. He didn't think he could take watching couples out on the dance floor as he stood drinking the punch from earlier.

Now outside, he slowly allowed himself to meander around the parking lot, later taking a seat at the bleachers for one of their baseball fields. He checked his watch. 8:27 P.M. It had barely been 30 minutes since he'd gotten there. Bad was his only ride home, and he probably didn't want to leave this early just for George.

Staring out at the baseball fields, George gave a small sigh.

Time to wait it out, he supposed.

It was suffocating. So, so suffocating.

Clay had lost a stupid bet - that wasn't even technically a bet - to Sapnap and was now at the ever so stifling homecoming dance.

Sapnap wasn't even there with him. He'd left to go dance with Sarah, having left Clay to talk to his date.

Oh yeah, his "date."

After Sapnap got asked out, he suggested that Clay bring a date. Coincidentally, it turns out that one of Sarah's friends was one of the girls who'd stuffed a note in Clay's locker. So naturally, the four of them went to homecoming as a group.

However, as soon as they arrived, Clay wasn't even able to make small talk with whoever this girl was. She left to "get drinks" for the two of them and hadn't come back since. So much for her being his date to homecoming, and so much for him being Sapnap's "wingman."

Now, he was sitting by himself on one of the gym bleachers, watching crowds of people dance out on the dance floor below him. He managed to spot Sapnap and Sarah; Both of them looking like they were enjoying themselves. After scanning the crowd a few more times, he caught a glimpse of the girl that he was supposed to be with. Well, at least he knew where she went now.

The sight didn't make him jealous, just annoyed. He knew going to homecoming wasn't going to be enjoyable in the slightest. But now that he was there, he felt irritated at the fact that he could be doing anything better. Clay's mind got snagged on the idea of reviewing George's filled plans as a result, and he felt even more annoyed. It was bad enough to be at homecoming, yet thinking of one of the very things he opposed the most really irked him.

As time passed, it was starting to feel harder and harder to breathe in the thick air of the gym. He needed to get out.

Quickly taking strides down the bleachers, he arrived at the back door of the gym. Without a second thought, he pushed open the doors and let himself be enveloped in the cool September air.

The night was peaceful, what with the sky speckled in stars and a half moon hanging in the sky, a total contrast to the stifling and loud atmosphere within the gym. As he walked through the sports fields, he took the time to breathe. The tranquility of it all put him at ease.

After taking a minute to rest and collect his thoughts some more, he realized that Sapnap would eventually need a ride home. He considered leaving, yet he thought of how Sapnap looked out on the floor with Sarah: happy with a huge sappy smile stretched across his face.

After another moment of thinking, Clay opted to stay at the school for him. Sapnap owed Clay big time for making him wait for him like this.

As he continued to walk, Clay thought about his coding project. Wait. No, no, his and George's coding project. That is, if they could even be allowed to enter this year. Maybe it was his pride or just his general annoyance with George, but he hadn't taken a single look at the packet other than

the title page. Clay hadn't flipped through it, he hadn't skimmed it. He simply hadn't done anything with it.

The childish part of him said to stay that way. It told him to keep the packet untouched for who knows how long. It told him to ignore the feelings of guilt building up in him. They only had 3 days before their next meeting with Ms. Davis. He heaved a sigh. The thought of leaving it alone made him feel immature. The thought of reading it annoyed him to no end.

Shaking his head, he decided to set aside those thoughts. He'd think about it later. For now, he'd just wait for Sapnap and that'd be the only thing he focused on.

Coming upon the school's baseball fields, he found a set of clean bleachers he could sit on for the next hour or so. Walking up to it, he realized there was a dude already sitting on top of them. As Clay was about to turn around and look for another place to stay, he accidentally made eye contact with him. The two of them locked eyes.

The guy was wearing a navy blue suit and had brown hair, illuminated by the parking lot lamps and the sliver of moonlight. It was the very person he wanted to see the least.

"Clay?"

He blinked once. Then twice.

Great.

Chapter End Notes

sdkjfks thanks for the support last chapter! i'll try to update as consistently as possible :)

any criticisms and comments are welcomed! <3

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

It's not like they have anything better to do.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Clay?”

George couldn't believe it. Of all the people to see that night, on the sports fields outside of homecoming no less, Clay just had to be that person. Clay stood frozen on the concrete next to the bleachers, dressed in a black suit with a dark green tie, his hair slightly slicked back. George almost had to rub his eyes to make sure he wasn't mistaking it for someone else.

“What are you doing here?” Clay sputtered out, brows furrowing.

George felt his shoulders tense up. “Well, what are *you* doing here? I should be asking *you* that!” He shoots back, pointing at Clay accusedly.

“That,” Clay hops up onto the bleachers, “is none of your business.”

“Ok then. The reason as to why I'm here isn't any of your business either,” huffed out George.

Both of them remained silent for a little while after that. The air between them felt just as thick as it was in the gym. The lights outside were dim, the last bits of sunlight mostly gone. Cropped grass and the dirt of the baseball field kept George's eyes occupied for the most part. Yet, he'd occasionally look over at Clay, who was mostly just scrolling through his phone.

George let his mind wander as he stared out at the field, and then at Clay. Why did it have to be Clay that came over to the baseball fields? The very thing he wanted to avoid the most, the very thing he tried to escape from that night, was practically sitting right next to George at that moment.

“What?” Clay said.

Snapping out of his thoughts, George blinked a few times. “What?”

“You've been staring at me for like, 3 minutes. What do you wanna say?” He said, slightly annoyed.

“I don't want to say anything,” George said.

“Then why were you looking at me?”

It was obvious Clay was going to keep pressing unless George gave an answer. Giving a defeated sigh, George simply says, “I guess I was just still wondering why you're here.”

Automatically, Clay's nose scrunched up. “Interested in my personal life, now are you George?”

“You literally asked me the same question, like, 10 minutes ago!” George snapped, throwing his

hands up.

Again they went silent, the two turning to look away with the air even thicker than before.

Well that went great. A tight lipped prick is what he is, George thought. Propping his chin on his hand, he felt like a toddler. It wasn't like George had to make small talk with Clay anyways. The sooner he could leave, the sooner he could get away from Clay. He just needed to wait it out until Bad-

"My friend brought me here."

George turned his head to look at Clay. "What?"

"You asked me why I'm here, didn't you?" Clay said, rubbing his neck. "My friend brought me here. I had a date but she ditched me as soon as we walked in. So now I'm here."

George snorted at that. "Aw, oh no. Your date left you."

"Shut up, I don't see you with anyone around here," Clay rolls his eyes and gestures to the empty seats around them.

George opened his mouth to speak, but Clay kept on talking.

"Why are you here anyways?" Clay asked.

George thought for a moment before telling. Clay did tell George why he was at homecoming. He supposed it was only fair that he tell Clay too. "My friend, Bad, had an extra ticket and I decided to come. But, he had a date and I ended up third wheeling and came out here."

"Why'd you even decide to come then?" asked Clay.

"Because I didn't think it through! And it doesn't look like you did either," George scoffed.

Clay let out a chuckle. "Yeah, I sure as hell didn't."

George's face scrunched up.

What was that? He'd never heard Clay laugh before. Well, okay, it might've been a stretch to say he'd never heard Clay laugh, but this one sounded just a little bit different from the rather few derogatory ones he'd heard at school.

"I didn't know you were capable of laughter," George said sarcastically.

"Why's that?"

"Well I mean, you're always so like, I don't know...", George thought for a moment, "You're really obnoxious and mean about everything. You're, y'know," He gestured at Clay, "you."

Clay stared and then gave a hard laugh that stretched into a wheeze, surprising George. "Wh-What's that supposed to mean?" He coughed out between giggles. "'You're obnoxious and mean?'" He air quoted, "Says the one who acts like he has something up his ass 24/7!"

George just frowned, trying to suppress a grin that was slowly starting to show. Holy shit was Clay's laugh intoxicating. "I do not!" He denied.

"Yeah, yeah you do!" Clay wheezed back.

Back and forth they bantered, Clay quickly going light-headed in the span of a few minutes, all the while dragging George into his laughing fit.

“Holy shit, I’m actually cramping,” said Clay after another round of wheezes, while pulling off his blazer to give his arms a little more mobility.

George could only laugh at Clay’s sudden pain as a result of his wheezing. Eventually, there was a lull in the conversation, giving the two of them a second to breathe. In the time they had sat there bantering, the temperature had slowly lowered, and colder winds began to sweep by more.

George shivered, rubbing his arms. “My god, the one night that I come outside it’s actually freezing.” Even with his suit, he could feel the sharp, cold air through the fabric.

“It is not cold. You’re just a huge baby,” says Clay. “Here.”

An object was draped over George’s shoulders. It was already heated up and warm, blocking the biting autumn air. It took him a few seconds to comprehend that it was *Clay’s* blazer that was on him.

Of course George didn’t know how to respond, fumbling around to get it off. “Why are you putting your jacket on me?” His face was slightly flushed, caught off guard by the unexpected gesture.

“You said you were cold, right?” answered Clay simply.

“Well, your jacket could have like, I don’t know, rabies or something!” protested George.

“Pffft, no, it doesn’t have rabies George. I promise it’s clean,” Clay grinned mischievously, as if he was goading George to test the truth of his words.

George just pursed his lips, returning the blazer to Clay. “I don’t need it. It’s probably sweaty from all of your laughing from earlier.”

Taking it back, Clay just shrugged. “Suit yourself.”

George felt his face grow hot, and he opted to turn away. Resting the back of his hand against his cheek, he could feel the warmth emitting from his face; He still felt the weight of the jacket on his shoulders. George let his eyes drift and rest on the shiny metal of the bleachers, letting his thoughts slow.

Suddenly, George’s phone gave an obnoxious ding that prompted him to messily pull it out of his pocket, still a little frazzled from the earlier gesture. After almost dropping it twice, he managed to see that he got a text message from Bad.

8:48 P.M.

Bad: Hey sorry but I took Skeppy home.

Bad: I’m really sorry, but he wants to watch some movies together.

Bad: I'm sorry for leaving you. I'll make it up to you I promise :((

Quickly, George typed out a response.

8:50 P.M.

George: it's fine! i'll just get a ride from my mom or something

George: you two have fun :)

8:51 P.M.

Bad: Thank you so much George!!! TvT

Shutting off his phone, George stared blankly out at the baseball fields. He lied. His mom had bingo night, her phone probably on do not disturb. His house was nowhere near walking distance.

"Hey," George turned towards Clay, "You have a car, right?"

"You've never tried their sandwiches? Not a single one?"

"No, I haven't. And I don't plan on it."

"Try mine."

"I am not eating that."

"Oh come on, try it. It's not poison."

"I already have food."

"Just take a bite. Come on, you know you want to."

George and Clay sat on the side of a quiet McAllister's, cheesy 90's music playing quietly in the background. The wall next to them sat adorned with trinkets and framed photos. In the deli, the two stuck out like sore thumbs in suits among the rest of the customers.

While Clay had agreed to take George home, they decided to take a quick stop and grab dinner, their stomachs growling in agreement. After 5 minutes of arguing, the two had settled on McAllister's as a sort of compromise.

Once inside, George had decided to pay for the two of them, saying that he, “Didn’t want to be indebted to Clay.” While picking what to eat, Clay decided to take mercy on George and order something cheap, as a sign of generosity. Now, the two of them were bickering over their food choices.

“Look, I’m perfectly content with my spud. You just sit there and eat your sandwich,” George says, taking a big spoonful of bacon and potato.

“It’s good.”

George takes a drink. “Mhm. You keep saying that.”

“Admit it.”

“I haven’t even tried it.”

“Like I’ve been saying,” Clay mumbles out between bites, “you should.”

“You’re insufferable.”

“It’s what I’m known for,” A smirk stretches across Clay’s face, crumbs of bread speckled across it.

George just rolls his eyes, yet a smile tugs at the corners of his lips. “At least get a napkin or something. What are you, a toddler?”

Opening his mouth to retort, he was met with the light flap of paper at his face, George having thrown a napkin at him. Clay just takes it, wiping his mouth. “I can get it myself,” He mumbles.

George grins in response, eating the last of his spud. Clay finished up his sandwich, wiping up the small messes he made on his shirt. An unspoken agreement went between the two to take a break before leaving, both of them having just finished dinner.

Eventually, the deli became quieter and scarcer. “So,” Clay said, standing up.

George followed suit. “So,” he echoes.

“You ready to go?”

George nods, following Clay as he walked out. Stepping out, the air felt cool. The moon, no more than a small sliver of white, was perched in the sky.

They stopped and stared at the sky for a minute, the two of them sleepy from a filling dinner and almost entranced by the view. Most of the stars were partially obscured by streetlights, but a few were visible nonetheless.

Neither of them said anything. There wasn’t really much to be said. Clay turned and looked at George. His pale face, illuminated by the stars and the moon. His back, yellow and soft from the lights inside McAllister’s. Clay could swear that he stopped breathing for a second.

George’s arm reached out in front of him, and his fingers began to trace something in the air.

It takes Clay a few seconds to say something. “What are you doing?” Clay asks, his voice surprisingly even, a little quiet too.

Snapping out of his momentary trance, George glances over embarrassingly as Clay, pulling his

arm back quickly. "It's nothing. You'd probably make fun of me or something."

"Tell me. I promise I won't make fun of you," Clay crosses his heart with his index finger childishly.

George huffs and pauses. "I'm, uh, into astronomy and stuff. My dad used to have this telescope and he'd teach me about constellations."

"Oh, cool," manages Clay, stuffing his hands into his pockets.

George looks up again. "The sky's pretty polluted, so I can't see much."

Clay's train of thought doesn't stop or halt. The thought presents itself suddenly, and it just rolls off his tongue:

"Why don't we go somewhere where we can see?"

It takes only 15 minutes of driving and a couple of wrong turns to arrive at a refuge just outside of town. After Clay pulled both himself and George up onto the roof of the car, they were met with the stunning sight of the sky above them.

Across it were splattered dots of white, with some larger, some smaller. Some brighter, some dimmer. The crescent of a moon sat delicately in that vast expanse of light and dark.

The two of them sat quietly, unsure of what to do.

Clay couldn't help but break the silence. "So, are you gonna tell me about the stars?"

George looked a little surprised. A little sheepish. It was a total contrast from his brash, confident demeanor at school. "I mean, I could? But why would you want to hear me talk about this stuff?"

"I mean, weren't you the one who said you used to study astronomy

with your dad?" Clay tries to sound uninterested. "I don't know a lot. You could tell me about what you know."

"I could tell you. I wouldn't say 'study' is the right word, but I could tell you some stuff," George's eyes flit away. "That is, if you wanted me to."

"Yeah, you could," Clay decides to look towards the sky. "It's not like we have anything better to do tonight."

I kind of wanted to hear you talk about it. It's a strange thought that Clay pushes down quickly.

"You promise you won't make fun of me?"

Clay pressed his hand to his heart, as if he was taking an oath.

"Well, I guess I could state the simpler ones," George says, shifting to get comfortable on the cold roof of Clay's car.

Clay just nods as he watches George slowly point towards the sky again. Clay watches him speak, but never to where he's pointing. He notices when George slips off his jacket to free his arms in order to map out the stars better. He notices the way George's voice slowly becomes stronger over time as he gets more acquainted with the atmosphere between the two of them. He notices when George's nose crinkles at some specific constellations more than others. He notices how the look in George's eyes changes when he talks about the first time he went stargazing.

Minutes pass in fives and tens. The ramble that pours out of George's mouth is soaked up by Clay, and he thinks he could listen for hours. And hours. And hours. And he doesn't think that he'd ever get tired of it.

Because it's different from the pratter he hears in classrooms and in their club. It's not haughty, and it's not self righteous. If an hour or two ago he was told to listen to George talk for 5 minutes, Clay would probably have broken into a sprint and gotten away as quickly as possible. But, right now it's different.

It's comforting. It's genuine.

It's . . . nice.

A ring from Clay's phone snaps him out of his thoughts. Opening his phone, large text read "Sapnap". Clay answered the call, the audio pausing for a moment before he heard a sigh.

"Hey, where are you?" Sapnap's voice was soft. Soft, and sort of sad.

"Holy shit I totally forgot, I'm so sorry. I'm on my way right now. Did something happen with Sarah?"

He hears another crackled sigh on the other end of the line. "I'll- I'll tell you later."

"Okay. It'll probably take me a little while to get there, but I'll be there."

"It's fine." Exhaustion is interwoven with every word Sapnap spoke.

Sapnap hangs up, the call beeping before fading out, leaving Clay on the line alone.

Clay stuffs his phone into his pocket. "I need to go pick up Sapnap." He feels slightly guilty, both for George and Sapnap.

George nods understandingly. "Yeah, of course."

The two of them slipped into Clay's car. "I'm sorry for having to stop you like that."

"No, no, your friend needs you to pick him up," George said, some concern slipping into his voice. "My mom's probably wondering where I am right now anyways. She should be home by now."

Another silent moment passes as Clay drives the two of them to George's house. They've been having a lot of those silent moments, Clay thinks to himself. As he drove down silent roads, he felt twinges of guilt. He felt bad for not being there for Sapnap, regret slipping into his head at the thought of something happening to Sapnap that he wasn't there for.

Yet, Clay didn't feel like he regretted spending time with George. It was a strange thought to hear in his head. It definitely wasn't one he thought he'd be thinking that night.

Slowing down at a stop light, he looked at George, who'd drifted to sleep in the middle of the drive

back.

Yellow streetlights and the red of the stop light gave George a peaceful look, just like when they were outside of McAllister's. The calm look on George's face was nothing like the constantly strained one he wore at school: eyebrows furrowed, lips drawn in a tight line, and nose constantly scrunched.

Slowly, George awoke from his nap.

"Oh look, sleeping beauty's finally awake," Clay said sarcastically.

George blinked a few times and yawned, too sleepy to come up with a retort. "Where are we," he mumbled.

"We should be in your neighborhood if Google Maps is right."

George looked out through the front window. "Take a left up ahead. My house is the third on the right."

A left turn and a bit of counting later, Clay stopped in front of George's house. Shuffling around, George made sure he didn't leave anything.

As he opened the car door, George looked at Clay. "Well, thanks for the ride."

"Thanks for the food."

George paused, still halfway sitting between the car door and the sidewalk. "I, uh," George struggled, "Thanks for listening to me talk about stuff. And keeping me company. You're not as insufferable as I thought you were."

A smile stretched across Clay's face. "You're not so bad yourself George."

George promptly got out, looking towards his house. "Don't let it get to your head."

"Too late," Clay chuckled.

There's a slight pause. "Goodnight Clay," George forces out.

"Come on, at least try to say it like you don't hate me," teases Clay. Yet, he felt a little bit of a struggle trying to say it too. "Goodnight George," he tries to say as naturally as possible, his voice failing at the end.

George gets out and shuts the car door, and Clay watches him walk away for a few seconds, George's back once again illuminated by soft, yellow streetlights. A weird feeling fills his heart where annoyance would normally be. Clay drove off to pick up Sapnap, ignoring whatever dull, yet new, emotion was poking at him.

What was that.

It was the only thought that circled George's brain ever since he got inside. Once his mom let him in, he headed straight for the shower, wanting to go to sleep as soon as possible. Yet as he laid his

head on his pillow, he could only stare at the ceiling, restless despite a rather eventful night.

It was stupid. The fact that Clay, of all people, kept him company instead of staying at homecoming. Sure, George didn't feel remorse for his date for ditching him, but he couldn't help but feel bad for Clay being just as lonely as George was that night. And, as much as he'd never want to say it out loud, George admits that he had fun.

Their bickering and bantering had a different air to it. It wasn't really competitive. Not in the way that it was at school, at least.

It also felt nice to talk about constellations and what not. While his knowledge definitely wasn't impressive or complex in the slightest, George felt that talking about it was something he couldn't really do on a daily basis. It was a nice change of pace was all.

There was also the laugh. Clay's stupid steaming-kettle-esque laughter. It was almost absurd how easily George got swept up in it. It made his heart feel all prickly and pruney when Clay laughed at a remark George made.

George had lay awake for 10 or so minutes, just thinking those very thoughts.

It was extremely repetitive. Ever so repetitive.

Unable to handle another moment plagued with memories from that night, George turned on his desk lamp to drink some water. As he put down his cup, his eyes caught on the manila folder, and he took a second to stare at it.

He shuffled around and got up from out of bed. Gingerly, he held it by the corner. His eyes scanned the outside of the folder, as creaseless and as clean as when Clay first gave it to him. Flickers of someone's voice passed through George's thoughts, and he shook his head.

His movements were pensive and hesitant, as if he was still holding back on something.

He glanced at the time and then the folder. Taking a seat at his desk, he took out a pencil and some notebook paper.

It's not like I have anything better to do.

And with that, he opened the folder.

Chapter End Notes

asdjfask im so sorry for how long this took me!!

school swamped me, and i really, really struggled writing this chapter... i want some things to feel natural so everything's gonna be a bit slow? if that makes sense

anyways, your comments make me really happy!! any criticisms are welcome as well!
:>

thanks for reading! <3

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

It's a start at least.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Oh you little-"

"Hurry up, you still need to pick up Sapnap!"

Clay blows a raspberry at his cat as he rushes out the door, swinging on his backpack and grabbing his wallet.

"Did you grab all your stuff? Water Bottle? Homework?"

"Yes, I did," Clay nods as he shuffles into his sneakers.

Pressing a kiss into his mom's cheek, he got into his car and waved goodbye, rushing to pick up Sapnap.

By the time he got to Sapnap's house, he managed some time to spare to catch his breath.

Hearing a knock on the passenger's window, Clay unlocked the car for Sapnap, who quickly slipped in.

"Hey."

"Hey."

As Sapnap quickly ate his breakfast in Clay's car, the drive to school was relatively silent.

Glancing over, Clay couldn't help but worry about Sapnap after what happened on Friday.

It had turned out Sarah had used Sapnap to get back at her ex, and, ironically, they ended up getting back together at the dance. When Clay had picked up Sapnap on Friday, they ended up getting ice cream together, and it goes without saying that Sapnap was devastated.

Yet as Clay looked at him, Sapnap looked as normal as he ever did: realizing he didn't do some homework, stuffing breakfast into his face, and falling half asleep. If Sapnap was still caught up in Friday's events, it was understandable. If he wasn't, then that was that. Clay knew better than to pry about it.

Arriving at school, Clay shook his head. He had bigger things to worry about. Letting Sapnap leave without him, he rustled through his backpack. In his rush out of the house, he was worried that he'd left something. Seeing peaks of colorful sticky notes in a thick packet and a thin, manila folder next to it let Clay breathe a sigh of relief.

Thank god he didn't forget them.

Stepping out of his car and into the school, he steeled himself, anxious of what was to come at the end of the day.

“Alright students, have a good afternoon! Make sure to do all even problems on pages 218 and 219.”

George, who was on the far left of the classroom, and Clay, who was on the far right of the classroom, both sat still as Ms. Davis left for the teachers’ lounge, all three of them keenly aware of the high stakes of their meeting.

Looking out the window to occupy himself, George couldn’t help but feel paranoid. He felt hesitant about showing his work to Clay and Ms. Davis. He wasn’t even sure why he did it. It was almost a spur of the moment decision, him being swept away by the façade of Clay he managed to form on Friday night.

Over the weekend, George constantly reminded himself that the Clay at school wouldn’t be the same. No matter what funny laugh or witty remark Clay possessed, he wasn’t any different: Clay was still the same arrogant asshole that he knew.

Yet, some part of him kept on proposing the idea that “school” Clay could actually be nice. That “school” Clay could take the liberties to review his packet and give his opinions the light of day. As much as he kept on denying it, the idea only kept on nagging him.

He didn’t want to create false hope. He didn’t want to keep feeding into the idea of Clay that he had met on Friday night. If George was the only one out of the two to have done what Ms. Davis said to do, it just meant that they’d get to compete this year. That would be that.

Even so, George felt an annoyance within him at the idea of only *him* doing an analysis. It was as if he’d expected something out of Clay. Did he feel betrayal at the possibility of Clay not even looking at his ideas? His plans? Was he annoyed? Was he disappointed?

George couldn’t help his frustration at himself. Clay was making him feel unsure now. The foundations that he’d formed in his head of Clay were now crumbling, leaving George to mentally pace back and forth on what to make of Clay. They hadn’t even spent that much time together. Yet, bickering over food and talking about the stars together felt like enough to start questioning Clay’s character.

“Hey.”

George whipped his head around and looked up to see Clay standing next to his desk. Clay had somehow managed to cross over the classroom as George was lost in his sea of confusing thoughts.

“Hey,” George manages, feeling his words get partially stuck in his throat.

Metaphorical cricket chirps could be heard between the two of them.

Both of them coughed, as if it was going to clear the air.

Clay scratched his neck and his eyes flitted off somewhere. “I did this. Over the weekend. Take it

if you want it, we'll be showing Ms. Davis later probably."

George felt papers being pushed onto his desk. Two items were put down. In one of them, familiar sticky notes he'd left in his packet were present, hanging out from the sides between papers. The other one was papers that were neatly put into a manila folder, just like what Clay gave him two weeks prior.

It was a surprise and a good one nonetheless. A feeling bubbled up in George's chest, swirling and mixing with the already present and confusing thoughts he'd been thinking a few minutes before.

"I don't expect you to have anything. I just wanted you to know that at least one of us did it," Clay said, his hand still rubbing at his neck.

George couldn't help the grin that appeared on his face. Bending over his desk, George rustled around in his backpack.

"Now, don't expect to take all the glory." He promptly pulled out Clay's manila folder and the stapled packet of notebook paper he'd formed while going through Clay's ideas.

Breathing out a sigh, Clay's face washed over with something that George couldn't quite place.

Relief?

Happiness?

"So, I take it you two have some reports to share with me?" said a voice.

The two of them whipped their heads around to see Ms. Davis leaning on the door frame, sweet tea in hand and a slight smile showing that she'd overheard the two of them. They simply nodded in confirmation.

"Well, no matter what the reason, I'm glad you two decided to do it," She took a seat at her desk. "Truly."

The air around them had relaxed. George grinned down at his original stack of stapled papers, now returned from Clay, knowing that there was some amount of thought given to them.

"Now," Ms. Davis clapped her hands together, bracelets she wore that day jingling with delight, "Who'd like to go first?"

Thus the hour they had together passed by quickly, George and Clay taking up criticisms and rare compliments alike. George was pleasantly surprised to find that a lot of their ideas were similar in a lot of aspects. He was actually appreciative of the criticisms Clay provided, most of them being relatively insightful and helpful to George.

By the time they left the classroom, George found himself walking in step with Clay out the door for once, the two of them continuing to discuss probable ideas for the upcoming competition.

"I didn't know you knew so much about Minecraft," Clay says offhandedly.

"Are you kidding me? It's a part of my life," George says. "It's kind of lucky that we're coding a plugin for it this year."

"Really?" Clay asks. "I actually play it a lot too."

"Really?"

Clay hums in confirmation.

Arriving at the back parking lot of the school, they began to part ways. George didn't know why he couldn't say a simple goodbye, much less why he felt a pang of disappointment in his chest.

"Wait."

Startled and surprised, George turned around. "What?"

"I realized the other night that we don't have any way to talk to each other," Clay mentioned, rustling around his backpack, "Even though both of us have been in this club for more than a year."

George nodded slowly, realizing the truth of Clay's words. It was a little surprising now that he'd thought about it. Then again, neither of them wanted to interact with each other any more than they had to.

"So, could you give me your number?" Clay asked, holding out his phone to George.

After realizing how embarrassing his wording was, Clay quickly waved his hands in front of him, "Wait, not like that! But - "

"Yeah - yeah I get what you're saying," George fumbled around to pull out his phone, cheeks changing in hue. "Here."

After a brief, yet awkward, exchange of phone numbers, the two handed the other's phone back, now with one more contact than two minutes before.

Stuffing his phone into his pocket, Clay gave George a lopsided grin. Why was George's heart doing that thing again?

"Well, I guess I'll see you later," Clay says, shifting his backpack on his shoulders. He gave a small wave and left for his car.

"Yeah, see you later," George muttered, his voice surprisingly even, and gave a slight wave back.

George noted how Clay's hair was a brownish-gold in the sunlight as he walked off. It bounced slightly with every step he took.

He felt another pang inside his chest. Whether it be from disappointment or something else, George wasn't sure how to feel about it. That day had been confusing to say the least, and what had just happened definitely wasn't helping George get a grip on his thoughts at all. Gripping his phone lightly in his pocket, he walked off for Bad's car.

"Ah fuck."

"What?"

Clay gave slight hiss as he touched the back of his right hand. "It's this scratch I got from my cat. She's done it at least four times this week now."

He gave a slight tilt to his hand, letting George peek at the thin, long scar running across his skin.

The two had been leaving school from Ms. Davis' class together on A days. One day, Clay had to readjust his really uncomfortable backpack strap, and he ended up walking in step with George to the parking lot. And Clay's backpack strap had just so happened to become "uncomfortable" the next time they had Ms. Davis, and the next, and the next, and the next.

Sure, it wasn't the most subtle, but if George had noticed, he hadn't said anything.

Each time they'd leave together, they had some conversation about something or maybe someone. However, talking wasn't so easy most of the time, the two of them still slightly on edge with one another. Walks would be silent and small talk would only hold for just seconds at best. Yet as a few days passed by, the two began to become more acquainted.

"Does it hurt?"

Clay almost laughed, "Well what do you think doctor?" He rolled his eyes, "No shit, of course it hurts George."

"Oh, well excuse me for asking," George huffed.

"Well-"

"On a much more important note, what's your cat's name?" George interrupts, becoming interested in Clay's cat.

Faking a scoff, Clay holds a hand to his heart offendedly. "Her name is Patches, you asshole," Clay says, "And I can't believe you care more about my cat than you do me."

George just deadpans at Clay, who was giving George a pout as he held his hurt hand.

"I thought we were friends Georgie!" feigns Clay dramatically.

Almost automatically, Clay was met with a whack at his shoulder from George. "Don't call me that you weirdo," says George.

"Well, you can call me by my nickname. Since I'm so much nicer, and much, much, less stingier," offers Clay, feeling a bit generous.

"And what would that so called nickname be?" George asks, an eyebrow raised, "Mr. Idiot? Or maybe something dumber?"

"Actually," corrects Clay, "It's Dream. Most of my friends call me Dream instead of Clay."

A pause.

A few seconds passed. And then a couple more.

Clay began to bite the inside of his lips. For some time, Clay had been contemplating telling George about his nickname. He'd been even more anxious about even letting George call him Dream. It wasn't because of the name itself, but more because that would mean Clay would officiate that the two of them were "friends," and, frankly, Clay wasn't sure if George had considered them that.

The longer George stayed silent, the more Clay worried that George didn't actually feel they were friends.

What if he'd read the situation wrong? What if George really didn't like him as a friend? Were

they still in their phase from before?

Clay rushes to say something before his thoughts overtook him even further. “Hey, you don’t have to call me Dream, y’know. It was just-”

“No, no I’ll do it.”

Clay stops dead in his tracks. “Really?”

George stops too, looking at Clay, and rubs his arm. “Well, I mean yeah. Why not? It’ll just take me a bit to actually call you Dream, I think.”

“Oh. Ok, cool, cool,” Clay says as he pushes open the back doors to the parking lot, partially holding them open for George.

Starting for his car, Clay couldn’t help bouncing on the balls of his feet. “Well, Sapnap has this thing he wants us to do today, and I’ve gotta hurry up and head over.”

George nods. “See you tomorrow then.”

“Yeah, see you tomorrow George,” Clay waves, and he quickly turns around and leaves the back door.

He can’t stop the grin that stretches on his face as he runs towards his car.

It's a start, he thinks.

Chapter End Notes

a short chapter for today
wanted to start building it up a lil

also YOUR GUYS' COMMENTS ACTUALLY MADE MY WEEK AWHASDFA

any comments or criticisms are welcomed!! ty for reading! <3

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

The two spend some time working at Clay's house.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Staring.

It was all George had done that Saturday.

His phone sat blankly on the corner of his desk, not making a sound and showing no change in incoming notifications. George watched it intently, as if his staring was going to change that. However, to no avail.

With his futile attempts proving to be just that, George groaned out in annoyance and impatience.

Despite having exchanged phone numbers almost a month ago, he and Clay never talked or texted outside of school. Then, to George's surprise, Clay proposed they meet up outside of school to get some other tasks done so they could spare some time with Ms. Davis, and he said he'd text George to find a day where they were both free.

It was Thursday when Clay suggested that.

The hours since then had been excruciating for George, having to treat the phone as if it were a ticking time bomb at all times.

He rolled over on his bed, back on his blanket, and stared at the ceiling. Plastered up there were glow-in-the-dark stars George got when he moved to the United States. However, the poor quality of the gel stickers only allowed them to emit a soft light for a few days, before fading out to a pitiful glow.

Staring at the cheap plastic, his mind wandered back to stargazing with Clay.

Oh. Wait, not Clay. *Dream*.

George still wasn't accustomed to calling him Dream, the name rolling off his tongue in an awkward manner. It felt weird calling Clay, Dream.

It felt personal. Really close, and really, really personal.

It wasn't that George didn't want to be personal. It just felt weird. It was a complete change of pace compared to them just a few months prior: not talking to one another besides when it was absolutely necessary, bickering over the smallest numbers down to the thousandth of a decimal, wordlessly competing to leave school and each other first. Every conversation felt as if there were thousands of needles pricking every inch of George's body, and every conversation always ended on a sour note.

He sighs, feeling strange at thinking of their dynamic prior to homecoming, and sits up. As much as George would never want to say it out loud, he wanted to put in the effort to have a better relationship with Clay. Outside, birds chirped quietly at the changing seasons, the leaves now turning into shades of warm tones and scattering to the winds.

A loud vibration causes George to partly jump and scramble for his phone. “Clay” sat boldly on his screen as a call rang through, and George was terrified.

He was ready to send a text message, maybe even two. But, calling? Speaking? That was out of the question.

George hesitantly pressed the receive button, anxious about talking, but even more so not answering the call at all.

“Hello?”

Silence.

George repeats, “Hel-”

“Hey!”

“Hey,” George says quickly, startled and unprepared.

“Sorry I didn’t say anything yesterday. Some stuff came up and I just forgot.”

“No, no, it’s good,” replies George, sweeping aside the worries he’d accumulated in the past few days.

“Anyways,” Clay’s voice crackles slightly over the line, “When are you free?”

He racks his brain for any possible things he would have forgotten and nothing comes up. “Anytime works for me.”

“Okay, so would right now work?”

George felt himself swallow down a cough. “Wait, like *right* now?”

“Yeah, like in thirty or so minutes. Something like that.”

“Where?”

“We could go to my house if you want? My family went out of town to go shopping so it’ll be quiet for the most part.”

“Yeah, yeah that works.”

“Ok then, I’ll send you the address and you can just head over soon.”

“Sounds good.”

“See you then.”

“Bye.”

A beeping noise signaled the end to the call, and George felt himself let go of a breath he didn’t

know he was holding. He cringed at the empty goodbye he gave and the lackluster conversation they had just exchanged.

Shaking his head, he got up and began to pack his things, unsure of what was to come that afternoon.

“Oh, hello there,” George murmurs as he pets Patches for the fourth time that afternoon.

“Okay, we met up to talk about this year's competition, not to pet my cat every five minutes,” Clay reminds George.

“I can't help it. She's just way more interesting,” mutters George as he scratches the underside of Patches' jaw. “It's not my fault she comes for pets.”

It was sort of endearing, the way George's voice went soft for Patches. Clay swallowed the thought down.

Patches walked away to roam the house once more.

“You can just, oh I don't know,” Clay ponders jokingly, “not pet her.”

Just as he said that, Patches poked her head out from around the sofa once more and walked near the two of them. George glanced up at Clay cheekily as his hand gravitated towards the feline.

Clay gave a sharp glare. “George.”

His hand settled on Patches' soft fur, and a small purr was given in response. “Whoops.”

Clay scoffs and starts to stack the papers they'd accumulated that afternoon.

“Wait, why are you tidying up? Are we done?”

“I mean, I would say we are. We got a decent amount done today, besides you unnecessarily finding the need to pet my cat in ten minute intervals,” Clay laughs as he closes his laptop.

“Oh, well then I'll tell my mom to come and pick me up.”

Wait. George was leaving. If they were done working, then what was the point in him having to stay? Clay wasn't sure why the thought hadn't clicked earlier. He felt a twinge of disappointment, as the two hours they'd spent had flown by in the blink of an eye.

Before George could start a call, Clay spoke up. “Do you wanna play Minecraft?”

“What?”

Clay felt himself trip up. “I mean, if you want to. If you're free that is. It's just that you said that you play in your free time, and-”

“Yeah, why not,” George said, cutting off Clay's rambling.

“Really?”

“I don’t have anything better to do. It’s either playing Minecraft with you, or I go home and get a head start on next month’s physics homework.”

Clay still felt hesitant, his idea being slightly out of the blue. “You sure?”

“Yeah, I’m sure,” George says, and then grins. “I bet I’m better than you.”

Feeling his eyebrow quirk, he gave George a look. “Oh come on now, don’t get on your high horse. We haven’t even started playing yet,” says Clay, before smirking. “I’m the better one anyways.”

George’s face has a competitive grin, and they both quickly open their laptops. “I bet I can get to the Nether before you.”

“I bet I can get to the End before you,” Clay shoots back, creating a world for the two of them to play in.

“I bet I can beat the Ender Dragon before you.”

“You’re on.”

With that, George hopped onto the world Clay had made and the two rushed to get resources, Clay’s previous anxieties quickly swept away. Seconds and minutes trickled by as the two rushed to beat the game, and before they knew it three hours had passed.

“Clay, don’t you dare!” George furiously clicked at Clay’s character, who was whacking away at George.

“Hey, you didn’t say we couldn’t kill each other. Besides, you’re the one who started it,” Clay says, maneuvering around to get behind George’s shield.

The two went quiet as they chased each other around the island of yellow stone, the Ender Dragon flapping around, its health dangerously low.

“DREEEEAM!” George screeched out at an ungodly high pitch as he was knocked down to half a heart.

Clay faltered in his hits, accidentally allowing George to use his bow to fire at the Ender Dragon and get the last two hits in.

As purple lights and crackling thunder sounded in the game, George stood up in triumph. “Let’s go! I told you I was better than you!”

“Hey, I got distracted at the end there! No way in hell are you actually better than me,” Clay refutes.

George was beaming with pride as he laughed at Clay’s loss. His smile, bright and blinding, made Clay’s words get stuck in his throat. A pitter patter in his rib cage brought Clay back from whatever trance he was just in. He dragged his eyes to his computer screen.

Flopping down onto the sofa, George celebrated his victory by petting Patches. “Can you believe it? I beat that stupid Dream over there,” he murmured softly in a sing-songy voice.

Clay didn’t know how to feel about the fluttering in his chest at hearing both his nickname and George’s softened voice at the same time. “I was going easy on you,” he stuttered out.

“Mhm, yeah right,” said George smugly. He glanced over at Clay and gave a prideful grin.

Clay swears that he’s going to get a heart attack at how many weird heart palpitations he’s been getting this past hour. He turns away to distract himself, looking at the clock on the wall. George follows his eyes and looks at the time too.

“Oh, jeez we played for a while.”

“Yeah, I guess we did. Do you need to go home?”

“Mhm. It’s awful being here,” George says sarcastically, still petting Patches, and then murmurs to her, “You’re the only good thing about this place.”

“Oh haha,” Clay rolls his eyes. “You’re pretty awful yourself.”

“Trust me Patches, it’s absolutely unbearable being here with Dream. I don’t understand how you can live with him,” George says to Patches with a fake pout.

Clay feels himself freeze up and shake it off just as quickly as it came. “Well, I remember a certain someone saying that Dream wasn’t as ‘unbearable as they thought’,” Clay mentions slyly.

George tenses up. “I - well - I revoke my statement,” George stutters out.

Clay fakes a scoff. “You can’t do that!”

“Well, I just did,” George says as he turned his attention towards Patches once more.

George gives a light chuckle, and Clay’s heart tightens. “But seriously, my mum’s probably done making dinner by now and I’m pretty hungry.”

“Well, stop petting Patches and pack up your stuff and then we can leave,” Clay says as he gets his keys.

“Oh come on, give me like, one more minute,” protests George as he scruffs up the top of Patches’ head.

“It’s not like you’re never seeing her again,” Clay rolls his eyes.

George stops and stares at him, and Clay realizes the implications he just gave. “I mean, you know, for group projects and stuff. We’ll be working harder from now on and you’re bound to come back to my house,” he reiterates.

“Yeah, yeah,” George nods quickly and stops petting Patches to gather his things.

The ride to George’s house was rather quiet, as neither had really anything else to say to each other. However upon arriving at George’s house, Clay felt the need to say a goodbye.

“We got a lot done today. Thanks for coming over, and stuff,” Clay says as George started getting out.

“Yeah,” George says, “I had a lot of fun. Tell Patches I said hi.”

Clay puts a hand to his chin and pretends to think. “Mm, I don’t think I will.”

“Oh come on, why not?” asks George.

“I just don’t feel like it,” says Clay smugly.

George gave a fake pout. “Fine, I’ll just do it the next time I see her.”

“You better. She gets lonely sometimes seeing just my family all the time. I think she likes you a lot by the way.”

George gives a slight smile at that. “Well I like her a lot too, by the way. Thanks for the ride Dream.”

Clay has to try to keep his voice steady. “No problem. I’ll see you on Monday.”

“Yeah, see you on Monday,” George waves as he walks towards his house.

Driving away, Clay swallows and pushes down the thought that had bubbled up onto the surface of his churning emotions. By the time he gets back home, the thought plagues him as he tries to forget it.

I think I like you a lot, by the way.

Chapter End Notes

sorry for the extremely late update!! i honestly was not feeling it after the 4th chapter and took a quick break

but i'm back now with this chapter for u guys :)

hope u guys like it! any comments or criticisms are welcome <3

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

George has a less than pleasant dream.

Chapter Notes

1.) Quick warning! There is a part that could resemble a panic attack later in this chapter. If you don't want to read that, skip over the italicized portion of the chapter!

2.) From this chapter onwards, I will be referring to Clay as Dream, since George is more comfortable with saying his nickname now. :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Thank you two for working hard again!, and happy fall break you two! Make sure to not overwork yourselves,” Ms. Davis waved off to the two of them.

They gave a wave back, George and Dream slipping on their backpacks as they swiftly made their way out the classroom.

Dream gave a big stretch, reaching his arms up as the two of them walked. “So, what are you gonna be doing over break?”

George gave a small hum as he flipped through his thoughts. “Nothing much. Probably take it easy and just play video games all week. We do need to eventually meet up to revise some of the code we wrote last week though.”

“Yeah, there were so many bugs when I tried it out,” Dream noted.

“When’s a good day for you?”

“Hopefully any day? I’m not sure to be honest,” Dream says, fully aware of his family and their spontaneous decisions.

“I guess we’ll see then.”

Dream held the door open for the two of them as they walked outside. The air outside was dry and cold, the signs of winter finally starting to show.

“Happy fall break George,” Dream salutes off to George as they parted ways.

“Happy fall break to you as well,” George echoes.

Upon getting to his car, Dream was met with the raised eyebrows of Sapnap and Karl.

“What? Also Karl what are you doing here?” Dream asks, shooting a questioning look at both of

them.

“I invited Karl over this afternoon to do some stuff, but anyways,” Sapnap mentions offhandedly, quickly switching topics, “You’ve been talking to George an awful lot recently.”

Karl and Sapnap give Dream sly looks and start elbowing him. He just rolls his eyes and waves the two of them off, getting into his car.

“Yeah of course we are, each day is another day closer to the deadline. You guys know I take this stuff seriously,” Dream says, setting his backpack into the second row.

“Mhm, yeah of course Dream. It’s just that, I remember you really, *really* hating George last year,” Karl says, tapping a finger to his mouth in a pondering manner.

“And I still do.”

“Yeah, of course Dream,” Sapnap says.

Karl quickly slid into the passenger seat shouting, “I call shotgun!” Buckling up and tossing his backpack into the back row, he smiled mischievously at Sapnap.

“Oh you-,” Sapnap glared as he reluctantly shoved himself into the back row of the car.

The rest of the car ride devolved into Sapnap and Karl shooting insults back and forth, Dream letting them forget the conversation from before.

The digital clock read *12:49 A.M.* on George’s desk.

He gave a sigh as he slid deeper into his chair. George was nowhere near tired, given the five empty cans of energy drinks tossed into his trash bin. Slowly, he waited and watched as the clock ticked to *12:50 A.M.* on its screen.

Checking his phone, he was met with a barren notification center. He gave a sigh and stared at his ceiling, barely illuminated by the glow of his laptop and phone.

Flitting through his agenda of things to do or could do, he landed on the scuffed code he and Dream had managed to throw together the other week as a rough draft. Knowing a lot of elements were missing or wrong, they managed to throw together some barely coherent writing together.

George flitted through his messages and saw Dream’s name. Tapping it open, he typed up: *Hey* . Before he could over think the message, he hit send. Surprisingly, he was met with a quick response.

12:52 A.M.

Clay: Hey

Clay: Why are u up so late

He's one to ask, George thought.

12:53 A.M.

George: why are U up so late

12:53 A.M.

Clay: Couldn't sleep

Clay: You?

12:53 A.M.

George: same

George: would u be up to code some stuff

12:54 A.M.

Clay: Sure

Clay: Call?

George slowly mulled it over, his brain feeling a little stuffy that night. Yet, he responded quickly nonetheless.

12:55 A.M.

George: yeah

Almost immediately, a call rang through and George promptly picked up.

Holding his phone to his ear, he spoke, “Hello?”

“Hey.”

Clay’s voice was a little soft and tired, lacking the usual roughness it had. It made George’s heart do a funny little thing.

“Did you open the file yet?”

Some quiet clicking. “Yeah I just did.”

“Okay, so what were some things you found? I remember you mentioning something about it,” George asks, setting his phone down and putting it on speaker mode.

“Ah, give me a second. I wrote it down in a notepad the other night,” Clay says, and George hears light rustling in the background.

“Ok, so about opening doors and chests. Something’s causing a lag in those types of commands.”

George flitted through the code, taking a mental note of the problem Dream noted. He gave a small hum to let Dream keep on.

“Next...”

Both slowly and quickly the minutes trickled by, leaving the two talking until 2:30.

A small yawn came from Dream’s side of the call.

“Do you wanna go to sleep? It’s really late already.”

George heard a sigh. “No, no, s’fine,” Dream said.

“Is that so?”

“Mhm.”

They had both taken an unspoken break, sounds of mouse clicking and keyboard clacking quieting on both sides of the call. George set his head on his left arm, now laying on his desk.

Their voices had been quieting over the night, now reduced to light mumbles and mutters. Dream’s sighs and yawns had become more frequent. George’s eyelids kept on getting heavier.

“Hey, George.”

“Hm?”

“Can we take a break or something?”

“Yeah, of course. We can go to sleep if you really need to.”

“No, s’fine I told you,” another yawn, “I just need a minute.”

“Hm. If you say so,” George murmurs doubtfully, letting Dream rest for a minute.

No more words were exchanged, but George feels fine that way. It’s not awkward in a sense that there’s no words that can be spoken; It’s more in the sense that there isn’t anything that needs to be said. The lull in the conversation gives George a second to appreciate the peaceful atmosphere that

he and Dream had managed to create.

George noticed his eyelids close, and, unable to keep them open for much longer, accidentally drifted off to sleep.

He was standing on the stage for the Codeworld League State Championships. The stage lights were burning down on his skin. George felt himself sweat as he stood in the dizzying heat of the lights. The loud applause was muffled in his ears. The competition director's - Mr. Leonard? - voice blared in George's ears, the speakers on full blast right next to where George was standing. He couldn't make out the words.

Next to the podium where Mr. Leonard stood was the table of trophies, each one glittering in a fake, golden sheen. One stood out from the others, its height and size shadowing over the others.

A hand pushed George forward: skinny and old, yet forceful in its shove. He flipped his head around to see Ms. Davis smiling large and proud, hurrying him onto the stage.

George walked out onto the middle of the platform, squinting as every light turned towards him. He watched as Mr. Leonard hoisted the largest trophy out of its spot on the table. Striding over to George, they both had a chaste handshake before Mr. Leonard handed the trophy to George.

Suddenly, George's hearing cleared.

Mr. Leonard's voice faded in.

"Everyone, let's give another round of applause for this year's Codeworld League State Championship's winner! George Davidson from Greenview High School!"

The applause came sharply to George's ears, the claps deafening and loud.

Ms. Davis stood in the wings of the stage, just barely covered by the curtains. She cheered and whooped for George from the side.

Was there supposed to be someone else? Cheering for him? Next to him?

His head hurt. It vibrated with every rumble from the crowd, from every sound from the speakers, from every cheer yelled by Ms. Davis.

George turned towards the audience, and saw a black void. Sound echoed from what should have been the auditorium.

It looked so hollow. So empty.

Yet, the noise it gave was real beyond reason. Its clapping made its presence ever so clear.

George turned to Mr. Leonard who was speaking again.

His words devolved into muffled jargon.

George tried to speak, questions spinning around.

Mr. Leonard gave no reaction, continuing on in his speech.

George yelled, he felt his throat muscles ache and the vibration in his head. No sound came out. He felt himself weighted down and looked to see the trophy on the floor within his hands.

It now felt as if it weighed a ton, the gold reflecting the stage lights painfully into George's eyes.

He tried to talk again. There were no comments on his posture. There were no comments on his struggle to hold the trophy. There were no comments on his scared expression. There were no comments on the way George tried to yell for help.

Mr. Leonard deftly hoisted the trophy up with one arm, it now being carried between him and George for the cameras. The flashing and the noise of the shutters went in slow motion. George had to turn away, watching as the floor would momentarily become swathed in a white light.

The cameras wouldn't pause. The shutters kept clicking and the lights kept flashing. It was as if time had looped for everyone but him.

The applause kept going.

Mr. Leonard kept speaking

Ms. Davis kept cheering.

What is going on? Where is everyone? Why is no one talking to me? What is going on?

George tried to yell, but nothing would come out.

Why did it feel like there was supposed to be someone with him? Why did he feel so alone?

A ringing in his ears began. The lights beat down on George. The shutters continued click after click. Cheers and yells calling out George's name were growing. The acclamations crescendoed into a buzz of applause.

George fell to the floor and felt himself choke out a silent cough. He covered his ears, seeking some sanction from the noises which flooded his ears. His head pounded in an unsynchronized beat, the noises of the auditorium growing louder behind his hands.

George tried to scream. He cried out for help.

Where is the crowd? Where is everyone?

Where is Dream?

He shot up from where he lay on his desk.

George heaved heavy breaths, taking in where he was. He felt sweaty all over, his forehead was hot. There was a crick in his neck. The room was cool. His desk lamp was still on.

Outside, the soft morning light emitted a glow behind George's shut blinds.

Slowly, his labored breaths became even and George felt himself untense his shoulders.

He raised his hand out in front of him, moving his fingers slowly as if motion was a new concept. Feeling his fingers move was a strange sensation, his skin warm and slightly sweaty.

Gingerly, he touched his throat.

“Hah. . . Ahaha,” George mumbled out, feeling the small vibration from his neck.

He raised his right hand to his forehead, letting his arms and upper body rest on his desk. Blinking a few times, he recounted his dreams, the events still fresh and new to him.

The lights. The trophy. The applauding. The auditorium. The yelling.

Events flashed through his head, clips playing back like a slideshow. He remembered the feeling of the lights burning down on him. He could feel the weight of the trophy in his hands. He was scared at remembering that he couldn’t talk.

George recounted that he was on the stage. Winning.

Alone.

It was strange. Codeworld League is meant to be a team competition. There are no soloists, with each event having teams that can number from two to eight. Dream wasn’t in his nightmare at all.

All over George felt stiff and tense, still shaken by the events from that night.

It all felt so real. So sudden.

“George?”

George jumped and gave out a choked yell.

“Wait, George are you ok?”

The voice wasn’t coming from his mom; the sound was digital and rough.

“Dream?”

“Yeah?”

“Did we...,” George remembered them being on call, and drifting off to sleep, “Stay on call the entire night?”

“I think so. I just remember falling asleep sometime after taking a break. Then I woke up with this awful cramp in my neck,” Dream groaned.

“Same. I don’t think I ever wanna do that again.”

Dream let out a tired laugh. The two of them sat in silence, George resting his head back on his desk.

Quietly, Dream gave a small cough. “I heard some noise from the call and that’s why I got up. Are you... okay?”

“I, uh, yeah, just,” George sighed, flashes of the nightmare appearing in his thoughts, “Just a bad

dream.”

Another wave of silence. George’s neck really hurt. Regrets of not just sleeping in his bed prodded at him as he sat at his desk.

“Do you wanna talk about it?”

George gave a small sigh, looking off at his grey walls. “Sure I guess. Do you even care enough to listen?”

“If I didn’t then why would I be asking?”

George could literally hear Dream’s eyes rolling. “Well,” George started off, scooting into a slightly more comfortable position, “I was at the awards ceremony for Codeworld.”

Dream gave a small hum to let him continue.

“And... there wasn’t an audience. But there was clapping. Like, really, really loud applause. Ms. Davis was there. Mr. Leonard was there, the event director. He gave me the trophy for ‘winning’ or something.”

“Yeah.”

“But, everything was so wrong... y’know? There wasn’t an audience. It was just this huge void where the people should’ve been. And, no one could hear me. I couldn’t speak.”

George shifted in his chair again. “It was awful. And I kept on screaming for someone to tell me what was going on. But,” George gave another sigh, “No one would answer me. I felt so alone. And it was so, so loud. Like, it hurt to be there and everything just got louder and louder.”

“It just sucked a lot. And I think one of the weirdest things was that... you weren’t there. Like there are no soloists. You have to be in a team. And I somehow won something or whatever... and it just...,” George groaned and felt himself trip over his tongue, his thoughts becoming more of a jumble of emotions than anything.

George’s breathing started speeding up again, “I’m sorry.”

“No, no it’s good. You didn’t do anything wrong,” Dream shuffled around and paused. “Just remember that ... it was just a dream.”

George gave a weighted exhale. “Yeah.”

“You’re not there. And I’m still here.”

“Yeah.” A slow inhale.

“So... it’s okay now. And, honestly that sounds terrifying-”

“It was,” George let out a small chuckle.

“But it’s not happening anymore. And you’re okay now.”

George gave a small sigh, “Yeah, I am.”

“Do you need water or something?” Dream’s voice was interlaced with concern, something George realized he didn’t hear too often.

“I think I need to shower. I’m all gross after that absolute nightmare.”

“Ew, you’re all gross and stinky. Not like you weren’t already,” Dream laughed, the last traces of comfort having been replaced by his joking manners.

“Oh, shut up. You’re the absolute worst,” George scoffed.

“I’m taking it as a compliment Georgie,” Dream’s smile could be heard through the call.

“Why you...,” George felt a grin slip on again. “I’m hanging up.”

“Fine, I have other stuff I need to do anyways,” Dream pouted.

George gave a small snicker. Before he could end the call, Dream spoke:

“But seriously, you’ll be fine... right?”

The sudden switch in tone threw George off guard. “I-yeah I think I’ll be fine. Thanks for listening to me and stuff.”

“I didn’t even get to say that much. If you need to talk to anyone, you can ask me. We are teammates and friends after all.”

“Yeah, yeah of course. Thanks again.”

“No problem. Now go take a shower you monkey,” Dream joked.

“I was going to do that anyways you idiot,” George laughed.

“Bye Georgie,” Dream sang over the call.

George felt himself choke on his words again. “Bye you weirdo.”

The phone blinked a few times before fading out to his lock screen. George flopped onto his bed, careful to not bend the cramp in his neck.

He sighed, feeling his face heat up again. George just chalked it up to the aftermath of the nightmare. In his head, Dream’s voice still echoed around, voice full of concern and care. It was another change of pace, and George wasn’t sure how to react to it.

They were just friends, and friends care for each other.

Shaking his head, he left to go shower and hopefully wash away his worries, not allowing himself another second to think of Dream.

Chapter End Notes

oh my god this one was a doozy

i based george's dream on one that i had a few months back. it was probably my first nightmare i woke up in a cold sweat from

this is gonna be one long slow burn so strap in

thank you so much for reading!! questions, comments, and criticisms are all appreciated <3

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

A revelation on George's part.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Wait, wait, it’s supposed to be $5x$?”

“Yeah?”

“I got $-3.5x$...”

“Ok, let me see your work really quickly.”

Bad handed his calculus homework over to George who quickly skimmed over the scribbles of numbers. Their first Saturday of December was spent toiling over copious amounts of worksheets their teacher had assigned them.

George pointed at one of the parts of Bad’s work. “You just put in the wrong variable. It’s supposed to be this one.”

He took a second to process the thought, before picking up his pencil. “Ohhh, ok that makes way more sense,” Bad took the paper back and re-did his work and got the same answer as George did.

After a few more questions, the two had managed to get through all the work - for the most part - accurately.

“Finally, we’re done,” Bad sighed, slumping down into George’s sofa.

Hobbling a little bit as he got up, George grabbed Bad’s cup and his. “I’m gonna get some more apple juice. Do you want any?”

Bad gave a nod as George walked out and into his kitchen. When George came back, he saw Bad texting away at his phone, barely acknowledging his return.

“Woah, who’re you texting Bad?” George asked slyly, raising his eyebrows a slight bit.

Bad looked at George and quickly put away his phone, color creeping into his cheeks. Adjusting his glasses, he grabbed his cup and took a sip. “Nobody,” he muttered.

George smiled at him again. “Mhm, of course it’s nobody. Let me guess,” George pretended to think long and hard about it. “It’s Skeppy isn’t it?”

Bad just adjusted his glasses again and took another sip, sinking further into the couch cushions.

George gave him a small smile as he sat down. “He’s a nice guy isn’t he?”

“Yeah, he is,” mumbled Bad, slipping his hoodie’s hood on and pulling the strings to avoid

George's eyes.

George gave a light laugh at Bad, who was slowly turning into redder and redder shades.

Checking his phone, George saw that he got a text from Dream in the two hours he and Bad had worked together.

1:24 P.M.

Clay: Hey are u up to work tomorrow?

Clay: There's some stuff I wanna do before we meet with Ms. Davis again

2:02 P.M.

George: sorry i was doing some stuff with Bad

George: but yeah i'm up to work tomorrow

Almost immediately, a pending text bubble popped up.

2:03 P.M.

Clay: Could we do it at ur house?

Clay: My sister is bringing some friends over tomorrow

2:04 P.M.

George: let me just check with my mom really quickly

George called for his mom from the living room, "Hey mum?"

"Yeah George?"

"Could I have a friend come over tomorrow too?"

George's mom walked into the living room with a cup of tea in her hands. "I'll be at Ms. Paulina's house. You know, that nice lady down the street?"

“So it’s ok?”

George’s mom gave an approving nod to him before walking off again.

2:06 P.M.

George: yeah she said it’s good

George: she’ll be out at a friend’s house for tomorrow

2:07 P.M.

Clay: What time should I be there?

2:07 P.M.

George: anytime works for me?

George: depends on how much work we wanna get done tomorrow

2:08 P.M.

Clay: 12:30 sound good?

2:08 P.M.

George: sounds good to me

2:09 P.M.

Clay: Cool

Clay: I’ll see u then :)

2:09 P.M.

George: :)

Without realizing it, George had curled into a ball on the other sofa in his living room, his knees up to his chest. The small :) Dream had sent made George unconsciously grin, his heart squeezing up a little bit.

“So, who are *you* texting,” Bad looked over George's shoulder and gave a sly grin.

Now it was George's turn to close up. Trying to duck his face and phone away from Bad, he smushed his face into the side of the sofa. “It's- it's Dream,” he mumbled.

“Who?”

“Oh I meant Clay,” George said, lightly wringing the sleeves of his sweater.

“Wait, like, Clay? That Clay? The one you do Codeworld with?”

George pursed his lips as he nodded, Bad's surprised look making him laugh a little.

“Wait are you guys, like, talking?”

“Just about school work and stuff. He's coming over tomorrow so we can clean up our drafts together.”

“Together?” Bad echoed.

“Yeah? Together? He's my partner for Codeworld. We have to work together?”

Bad promptly stood up and shook George by his shoulders, talking in a slightly strained, but joking voice. “Who are you? What have you done to George Davidson?”

“Pfft, what are you talking about?” George giggled as Bad looked at him square in the eyes.

“The George I know would never, and I mean never, talk to Clay outside of school. Much less smile when talking to Clay.”

“What do you mean ‘smile’?”

“Did you not feel yourself smiling? You had this grin on like- like- you like him or something!”

George sputtered, sitting straight up. “What the hell!-”

“Language,” Bad interjected quickly.

“We were just talking about coding and stuff. And he said something stupid, because after all, Dream is dumb. So that's probably why I was smiling,” George rushed out.

Bad gave a slow nod, doubtfully saying, “Uh huh, yeah right.”

“What! I'm not lying!”

Bad looked at him straight in the eyes, eyebrows raised. George just stared straight back, feeling himself purse his lips again.

“I'm not,” George said again, trying to get Bad's piercing gaze off of him.

“I just- when did this happen?” Bad asked him, slightly astounded as he tried to piece together the

two's new dynamic.

"Maybe, during September? We're friends now," George felt weird saying it out loud. "He's actually a pretty nice guy. I think. We've been getting way more done this year than last year."

Bad slowly nodded, taking a second to process the information and let George keep on.

"Like, we managed to both cooperate Bad. It was so weird," George said, slightly astonished as he reflected on the past few months. "I really did think he was a total asshole. Not that I don't still think that, but maybe just a little bit less? If that makes sense? After hanging out with him a few more times, I just think he's a little more bearable?"

Still nodding, Bad blinked a few times.

"It was so weird Bad. It was crazy. Like, Dream-"

"Dream?"

"Yeah? Oh, that's his nickname that he lets his friends call him and stuff," George reiterated quickly.

"- But anyways, after homecoming, we just started getting along? I just. . . I don't know he seems so different?" George felt words slightly more difficult to say, trying to find the right phrases to describe Dream.

"Homecoming? Was that where you were? With Dream?"

"Yeah?"

"Oh my muffin, why don't you tell me these things George!" Bad started shaking his shoulders again, with George breaking out into another laughing fit.

"What did you guys do?"

"We got dinner-"

"You guys got dinner? Together?"

"Yeah? And then we went to that park outside of town, you know the one with the big tree at the entrance? After that he gave me a ride home."

"How did this- Why were you- So he just gave you a ride home? And paid for dinner? And went to the park with you?"

George clarified, "Technically, I paid for dinner."

"I- George that doesn't change anything!" Bad sputtered out.

"What do you mean?"

"Also you said earlier, 'Hanging out more.' What does that mean? When did you guys hang out? You have to put me up to speed George," Bad drilled questions into George.

"Okay, okay, I will. Seriously it's not that big of a deal though-"

"Yes, George, it's a big deal! To me it's a huge deal!"

George put his hands up, “Okay, okay, so um, I think sometime in October....”

Slowly, George recounted minor events and meetups from the previous months to Bad. As he continued, he found it harder and harder to give quick and simple explanations without Bad asking him a dozen questions. Eventually, they got through the past few months and Bad slumped against the bottom of the sofa, resting his head on the cushions.

“Gosh George, I don’t even know what to say.”

“There really isn’t anything to say you know.”

Bad craned his head up to look at George. “I saw you guys walking out the building sometimes, but, like, I never knew that you two would ever voluntarily hang out outside of school.”

“I know, I know, it sounds crazy to me too.”

“But seriously for all the times you came to me ranting about Clay, I would never have imagined you two become friends like this.”

Picking up his cup to take a sip of apple juice, George said, “Me neither. It just sorta happened I guess. I don’t even know if you could consider us friend ‘friends,’ y’know? It’s more like we mutually agreed to become friendly on the basis of cooperating for Codeworld.”

“Are you serious?”

George raised his eyebrow. “What?”

“Everything you guys have done,” Bad motioned an arc with his arms, “I wouldn’t be surprised if you told me you guys kissed at this point.”

George coughed, almost spilling his drink. “What?” He managed to squeeze out in between partial chokes.

Bad quickly grabbed some napkins that were sitting in the middle of the table. “Oh my god are you okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine,” George took another drink to smooth the soreness in his throat. “You just caught me off guard.”

“Wait, so you guys have-”

“No, no of course not, what the hell Bad!”

“Language! But, it just sounds like with everything you guys have gone through,” Bad shrugged his shoulders a couple of times, “It sounds like something that would’ve happened.”

George waved his hands away quickly, nervous laughter filling the air. “No, no, no, no way would that happen. Trust me.”

Bad sat up straight and looked George straight in the eyes. “George?”

“Bad?” George shot back chuckling, now tense with Bad’s piercing stare.

“You like him don’t you?”

George promptly got up. “No, I don’t,” George said, finding it hard to keep his voice level, it

slightly wavering as he spoke.

He didn't like Dream.

It was a thought that he'd heard his pestering subconscious whisper to him once or twice, but he'd always shoved it down, thinking of much more weighted thoughts than that of a stupid crush. He felt his face heat up, the red burning on his cheeks and up to his head. Bad saying that thought out loud made him feel nervous for a reason he wouldn't say. He didn't even want to think of that possibility.

George heard Bad gasp as he stood up and walked away, grabbing his papers to preoccupy himself with putting them back into his bag.

"No way George!"

Stuffing the homework into his binder, George tried to think of other things. Wow, was that part of the wall dirty. Did his backpack always have a tear in the side pocket?

"What are you talking about?"

"So you do-"

"No," George got up and turned around, pointing at Bad, "No, I absolutely do not."

Bad raised his eyebrows doubtfully, trying to deadpan at George as a slight smile crept on his face.

"I do not! Don't give me that look," George pointed again.

"Geor-"

Suddenly, a loud ding came from Bad's phone, partially muffled underneath the throw pillows on the sofa. Bad promptly answered it, opening the message he got.

After typing out a quick response, Bad groaned and began to grab his things. "I gotta leave. I'm meeting with someone in a few minutes and I don't wanna be late."

Breathing a sigh of relief, George finished putting away his papers and opened the door for Bad.

Giving one last look around the living room, Bad began to make his way out before stopping George. "This conversation isn't over just yet," Bad squinted at him, obviously determined.

George gave Bad a nervous smile as he walked out, waving at Bad as he drove away.

Once inside, George walked back into the living room and cleaned the area. His face still felt hot. George tried to preoccupy himself, but it didn't stop his brain from repeating the question that Bad asked him. It bounced around annoyingly as he tried to focus on other things.

He didn't like Dream.

He didn't.

“George?”

He blinked a few times, snapping back to reality. “Yeah?”

“You spaced out. Are you okay?”

George looked at Dream, eyebrows slightly furrowed.

He had nice freckles. He had a lot too, or at least more than George.

Dream snapped his fingers an inch away from George’s face, startling George to where he whacked his hand out of the way. “I’m fine. Sorry, I’m just thinking of a lot of stuff right now.”

“You wanna take a break?”

“You sure?”

Dream gave a small hum as he scrolled through the files. “I think we got almost all the stuff I wanted to get finished before tomorrow, so I think we should be fine.”

“What else do you wanna do?”

“Here, just look at this,” Dream handed a notepad over to George, “I put a check mark by the things we already finished.”

Their fingers brushed slightly, sending small tingles up George’s fingers. He tried to pay no mind to it, hoping his face would cool down. Flipping through the pages, he found the most recent agenda of items, two more lines left unchecked.

“Let’s finish these first and then we can stop,” George decided.

“Good enough for me.”

He handed the notepad back and the two of them got to work.

Quickly they worked through the rest of Dream’s agenda. Later, George rested back against the sofa, hoping to take a small sip of water. Realizing the cup was empty he went into the kitchen, Dream declining the offer for a refill.

George’s mom was in the kitchen, grabbing her keys and a small bag.

“You haven’t left yet?”

“Oh, no not yet. I’m meeting her in a few minutes though so I’ll get going in a minute.”

“Okay, be safe.”

Watching the water fill in his cup, George was startled when his mom abruptly got his attention. “What?”

“I completely forgot! My floor is having a party for one of my coworkers who just got engaged recently,” She exclaimed. “I said I’d bring cookies and I bought all the ingredients the other week, but I completely forgot to make them, and I already told Ms. Paulina I’d meet with her.”

George recognized the look his mom was giving him. "I would make them mum, but I don't know. Maybe once Dream is gone or something. I think we're still-"

"I'm down to make them."

George turned and saw Dream leaned on the countertop of the kitchen.

"Really?"

"I mean, we have all the stuff done that I wanted to get finished. So I'm down to make cookies."

George pursed his lips, "Are you sure?"

Dream just shrugged. "It's either this or I go home and listen to my sister and her friends scream about whatever new thing they managed to obsess over."

George's mom gave a big grin to the two of them. "Thank you two so much. I'll send you the link to the recipe, okay George? I'm not sure when I'll be back, but thank you two again." She gave them a quick wave as she walked out the door to the garage.

The light slam of the door signified that only George and Dream were the ones in the house. The two of them tidied up the living room of their papers and laptops. After his mom sent him a link to the cookie recipe, he showed it to Dream and the two began pulling out materials. Swiftly, they managed to mix the ingredients and make the dough without a hitch.

Rolling his third ball of cookie dough, George set it onto the parchment paper on his tray. Dream glanced over, rolling his own cookie dough balls onto his own tray.

"My god, George I thought they were supposed to be the size of a tablespoon, not mountains."

George gave a small scoff. "You're one to talk. All your dough balls look like pancakes."

"They'll end up like that anyways y'know."

George turned to look at Dream, giving a small scoff as Dream looked at him haughtily, his flat cookie dough balls giving George a sort of glare too.

"Imagine not knowing how to roll cookie dough balls correctly," said Dream, sticking his nose up a little higher.

George couldn't help but give a stupid laugh, before realizing that Dream's face was a little too close for comfort. In fact, their entire bodies were too close for comfort.

You like him, don't you?

"H-okay, are you done?" George rushed out, quickly turning away and focusing all his attention onto the tray.

Scooping the last bit of dough out of the bowl and molding it a slight bit, "Yeah, basically I think."

"Okay, let's stick them into the oven and then set it for just eight minutes," George told Dream, looking at the recipe. He turned back to see Dream scooping out a small bit of cookie dough from the tray and eating it. "Wh-What are you doing you idiot?"

"Eating the leftover cookie dough? What's it look like I'm doing?"

"You're gonna get salmonella from that Dream!" George said worriedly.

Dream just scooped up the last smudges of cookie dough and ate it. "It'll be fine. Thanks for worrying about me though," he gave a smug grin.

Watching his proud face, George couldn't help but laugh a slight bit before pushing Dream to let the cookies bake.

Putting the trays into the oven with a little clacking, Dream set the time for the cookies. "So, what next, oh Great Leader George?" Dream gave a slight bow, earning a small whack to the top of his head.

"We're making the icing next you weirdo," George turned away, walking off to get the rest of the ingredients.

Quickly, the time passed, the cookies finished baking, and the icing was made. Then, it came time to decorate them. Too lazy to slip them into piping bags, they left the icing in the bowls and opted to spread them with spoons on the cookies instead.

George had only managed to get through making a green and red cookie before Dream decided to attack, swiping a thick glob of yellow in the middle of his third one.

Scoffing, George picked up a red spoon of icing, swiping a stripe of it across Dream's cookie.

"Why you—"

George quickly got into a defensive position, shielding his cookie with his hands from any further damage. He smiled teasingly, leaving Dream to spread a messy line of red icing down George's arm.

Mouth agape in a fake shock, he dipped his fingers into the green icing and proceeded to wipe it onto Dream's cheek, a green, sugary wound now adorning his face.

"Excuse me?" Dream quickly ran, grabbing the yellow icing with him, to the other side of the kitchen and partially ducked behind the kitchen island that sat in the middle of the room.

"Don't 'Excuse me?', you started this, and now you're gonna finish it," George said decisively, hiding behind the counter.

"Hey it's not my fault that your cookies looked so ugly. They were just begging for my artistic touch."

With that, George scooped up a glob of icing and smudged it across Dream's now defenseless cookie. "How's that for 'artistic touch'?"

"My cookies! Nooo!" Dream cried out in fake pain, falling to knees.

George doubled over laughing, Dream's cookie now a puddle of green icing with the rest of them having been splattered in the crossfire. He took a glance at the messy counter, random drops and spreads of icing across the dark marble.

Rolling his falling sleeves back up, George stood up straight and offered a hand to Dream, "Ok, ok but we should seriously finish these though. It'd suck if—"

Icing was wiped across his right arm; George hadn't noticed Dream pull out his icing.

“No, I’m getting revenge,” Dream held his bowl under his right arm, the other coated in sugary icing, and jumped up. “En garde!”

George narrowly missed another swipe at his arm, ducking around and laughing. He lunged at Dream, managing to get his forearm coated in red.

Quickly, Dream dipped his hand in his icing again. Before he could land a hit on George, George managed to stop him mid swing by grabbing his hand.

Realizing that Dream had stopped moving, he pushed Dream’s hand back right in his face, leaving a trail of yellow icing across his left cheek.

Before Dream could launch another counterattack, George managed to smudge green icing onto his face again with his left hand.

“Wh- Ahaha! You look ridiculous righ-“

Dream swiped red across the bridge of George’s nose.

“Who’s ridiculous now?”

George opened his mouth to retort, before he was met with another swipe at his face.

Clay wheezed out and gave a bright smile as he pointed at George’s cheeks, “We both match now!”

Touching his face quickly, he pulled back and saw his hand coated in green; Now both he and Dream were covered in sugary, green icing on their faces.

“Wait, you’re other side isn’t green. Let me just fix that for you,” Dream gave a mischievous look as he lunged again, armed and dangerous with another glob of icing.

George stopped his arm again, but Dream, now determined, kept pushing forward against George’s arm. The two of them wrestled for a slight bit, with George realizing halfway through that it was a battle fought in vain.

“C’mon Georgie, let’s be twins.”

“No way in hell! I’m already this disgusting,” George grunted out, with Dream forcing almost half his body weight forward onto him.

“Oh come oON-“

George’s sock, proving to be frictionless at the worst moment, slid underneath George, and he fell to the floor. Dream had fallen down with him, landing with a slight yelp on arm.

Slowly, George groaned out in pain, aching spots along the back of his body making themselves ever so present. Rubbing the back of his head, George propped his arms up behind him. “Holy shit, my ass hurts like hell.”

It took him a minute to comprehend the scene before him, blinking a few times before it fully processed.

The two of them had fallen into a tangled pile of limbs on the floor, Dream’s face barely pushed onto George’s stomach.

George felt his face heat up as he became acutely aware of the situation they were in. His skin was burning through his sweater where Dream laid his head. In fact, his legs and torso were burning at every site of contact with Dream's wildly strewn body across his kitchen floor. The scene would have been nice, had it not been for the multiple bruises George was probably going to have after falling. He felt Dream slowly shake his head against his torso as he propped up his arms.

Was his hair really that soft? George almost wanted to touch it.

He began to scramble up as Dream groaned in pain. "That's gonna leave a bruise," Dream said as he rubbed his elbow.

"Uh, yeah. Um- I'm gonna get cleaned up really quickly," George squeaked out, legs still pinned under Dream.

His face was heating up dangerously fast and he needed to get up. Immediately.

Dream quickly realized their position and scrambled to get up. "Sorry about that," Dream managed, dusting himself off slightly and offering a hand to George, "Do you, uh, know where the nearest bathroom is?"

George gave a vague point past the kitchen and Dream gave a nod as he left, disappearing out of his line of sight. Once he was gone, George cupped his head in his hands and let out a strained, quiet groan and gritted his teeth as he scrubbed off the hardened icing covering his hands.

His face was boiling hot, leaving him to splash the cool water onto his cheeks in an effort to cool it down. Gripping the sides of the sink, he couldn't help but think of the events from earlier.

He glanced at his hands and arms where remnants of the little battle from before used to be. George could feel when Dream touched the icing to his arm. He could recall the touch of his hand on his nose. They all gave a small, dull, feathered sensation where he recalled those feelings.

George saw Dream's face flash in his thoughts ever so clearly - each freckle, each grin, each glance - and ever more burned into flickering frames that played back in his thoughts. His stupid laughs echoed around, filling the void as the only playing track in George's memory.

You-

No, he didn't.

like-

Absolutely not.

hi-

"I'm back," Dream announced as he walked through the doorway, interrupting George's thoughts - that of which he was grateful for, for once.

"I can see."

"Oh really."

Dream shrugged his sleeves back up as he walked back over to their cookie making area, it now slightly more messy than before.

George gave a small glance and stood next to Dream doing the same, finishing his cookies quickly

without anymore conflict surprisingly. Once they finished, they cleaned the kitchen relatively efficiently, the two of them managing to smoothly operate together.

In the middle of the kitchen island were their cookies, neatly arranged and slightly piled onto one another. George gave a small grin and picked up one of the cookies he was relatively happy with; It was green and red, a clear split between the two colors in the middle of the icing. Dream did the same, grabbing one that was completely green save for some red dots across it.

“Cheers,” George raised his cookie.

Dream did the same. “Cheers.”

They munched on the cookies, leaning against kitchen counters respectively.

“Thanks by the way,” George spoke between bites, “For helping with the cookies ‘nd stuff.”

“Yeah, why not,” Dream shrugged. “It was fun.”

“Yeah, it was.”

“You should’ve seen your face when I got all that green icing on your face! You looked ridiculous!” Dream laughed out.

Why did his eyes crinkle like that, that gut wrenching way that made George feel like his legs were giving out?

“I- Well you started the whole thing!” George quickly threw out.

“Did I?”

“Dream just -be quiet,” George laughed and held his cookie back as if he was going to throw it, Dream giving a fake crouch as a feeble attempt to hide from it.

“No, not the cookie!” Dream half wheezed, “My only weakness!”

“Why you-“ George winded his arm back more, the laughter infecting him.

Dream continued to crouch farther down, holding his hands up in fake fear. His wheezes got louder and George couldn’t help but smile even more. It was absolutely contagious.

“I- haha, wait come down here,” Dream chuckled out, his breaths finally evening out.

George crouched down slightly, “What is it now?” He rolled his eyes.

Dream’s hand reached up and softly touched George’s right cheekbone, pressing off a small smudge of green icing that he missed cleaning his face earlier. Slowly, Dream pressed a few more times as he got more pieces of the icing of George’s face, and George could only sit there, dumbfounded.

“I, uh, sorry. There was some icing,” Dream mumbled out.

George immediately felt his face heat up and felt himself frozen in his spot on the floor. “No, it’s good,” he steadied his tone feebly.

He was having to do a lot of that lately.

They locked eyes for a millisecond before Dream shot straight up, brushing off his pants. “Haha, I think I should get back home,” Dream patted his pockets rhythmically as he quickly made his way to the living room.

Blinking out of his daze, George followed suit. “Yeah, yeah of course.”

Dream had quickly stuffed his things into his backpack, save for a few papers sticking out of the top. George opened the door for him, holding it open as he waited. It was cold and slightly dark outside, the sun now leaving earlier than usual.

Doing a last check of the room, Dream walked out the doorway and then slowly turned around to face George. The last rays of sunshine and George’s porch light were the only things that lit up Dream’s face. “Well, today was a lot of fun.”

George leaned against his door frame. “Yeah, it was.”

White noise of the neighborhood filled the air between them, neither of them speaking or moving.

“Well-“

“Hey I was-“

George let out a laugh, sputtering out, “Oh, wait you go.”

Dream chuckled the same, “No, no you go.”

“Well, I was just gonna say that we could do this more often. Y’know, since we’re like. . .,” George’s mind began to grasp at straws as his mind tried to fill in the blanks, “teammates and all that.”

Luckily Dream responded, “Yeah, we could.”

“Yeah,” George felt himself grin, maybe a little worried that Dream would think he was crazy for suggesting to hang out more often.

Dream grinned back just the same. “Yeah.”

“Oh yeah. What were you gonna say earlier?”

Dream chuckled out, “Oh, it’s nothing. Don’t worry about it.” He rubbed at his neck as he bounced on the balls of his feet.

“If you say so.”

“Well I do say so. What’re you gonna do about it?” teased Dream.

“I’m not gonna do anything about it because it’s cold you idiot,” George scooted back into the house past the door frame he was leaning on, the wind starting to sweep in.

Dream gave an airy laugh as he watched George shuffle inside. He could feel his stomach doing flips and his face heating up once more.

“Well, see you later Georgie,” Dream waved off.

George felt his heart constrict even tighter, and it was almost as if he stopped breathing. “I told you not to call me that you dumbass,” He muttered as he took a small step outside and whacked

Dream's shoulder.

Looking at him smugly, Dream teased, "Looks like it's not so cold after all huh, Georgie? What are you gonna do about me calling you Georgie, huh George?"

"Well I'll. . .," George looked up and was met with Dream's heart twisting smile. His words died in his throat. "I'll- I'll. . ."

"You'll what?" Dream leaned forward as he smirked.

Their faces were close. Really, really close.

George just turned and rushed back inside, his socks cold from the hard cement of his porch. "Y'know what I'll let you win this one."

"Ohoho, sore loser now are we Georgie?"

"I just- Whatever," George managed to get out, feeling his voice die out as his cheeks turned into even darker shades.

"Oh come on," Dream laughed as he watched George try to turn away. He gave another chuckle as George furrowed his eyebrows at him. "But, seriously, thanks for today."

Getting stuck, George managed, "No problem."

Dream gave an airy laugh. "Bye George."

George gave a weak wave as Dream walked towards his car and left.

Shutting the door, he slid down the cold wood and gave a muffled scream into his sleeves. His head felt as if it was melting, even though the weather was so chilly outside.

Why did he feel this way?

Cleaning up the living room and the kitchen, he felt his head spin.

Why was it him?

He made a quick dinner composed of the day before's leftovers and ate it in silence, his head only filled with his deafening thoughts. It was dark by the time he took a shower, the hot water only a momentary distractor. By the time he got into bed, he curled up and his thoughts overtook him again.

Did he have to feel this way?

George felt himself shake his head as he tried to drift to sleep.

He didn't have to when there was so much to dislike.

There was the way Dream was so unpleasantly stubborn at times. The way Dream was so haughty and self righteous. The way he was so sure of himself at every possible moment. The way he wouldn't listen to George at the worst times. The volume at which he spoke. The painful laugh that he had.

But there was a lot he'd uncovered over the past few months too.

There was the way he would try to compromise as the two of them came to an impasse. The strange way his voice dipped softly as George stressed about the littlest of things. The way his voice could smooth out in his attempt to understand both of them. The way his cheeks dimpled when he smiled. The awful jokes. The warm touch of his hands. The fluff of his hair. The number of freckles that peppered his cheekbones. The ever so awful and contagious laughter that George couldn't help but let himself get swept away by.

How was he supposed to hate him?

Chapter End Notes

oh my god i am literally so sorry for how long this took me. it went so long and i didn't wanna break it into different chapters skdjfkslj

but yeah obligatory baking fic to satisfy my inner romantic :)

i really wanna keep this as natural as possible but its so hard lmao

as always, any questions, comments, or criticisms are appreciated <3

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

A New Year's party.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hey.”

“Hey,” George gave a breathy laugh.

“Ready to go?”

George felt giddy on adrenaline and excitement. Dream’s friend was hosting a New Year’s party, and he was invited. Getting the impromptu call from Dream that morning to go was a surprise, but a good one no less.

His Christmas was a little quiet, just he and his mom for the holidays at home. Honestly, George didn’t mind the peaceful time with his mom; He always found noisy events kind of tiring. But, getting called to go to a party for New Year’s was a nice change of pace.

“George you have your phone? Wallet?” George’s mom peeked out from the living room couch, settled in to watch the Times Square Ball Drop on their TV.

“Yeah mum,” He gave her a chaste kiss on the cheek, “Bye, I’ll be back in a few hours.”

“Be safe you two!” She gave a small wave, “Clay, you’ll watch George?”

As his cheeks flushed a little, George groaned, “Mum!” He began pushing Dream outside as he slipped on his shoes clumsily.

“Don’t worry! I’ll make sure George doesn’t do anything stupid,” Dream laughed out as he waved over his shoulder to her.

George managed to shove Dream out and close the door, elbowing him in the ribs as he did so.

The two bickered as they quickly went to Dream’s car, eager to get inside and away from the biting cold. In the past week, the temperature had managed to drop significantly within just a few days, warm moments hovering at 60 degrees proving to be rarer and rarer with each passing hour.

Inside, it was already heated and warm, a welcoming and familiar feeling inviting George once he got in. Buckling up, he blew on his hands a slight bit and rubbed them together as he waited for the heat to sink in. As he did, he looked at Dream, who was shuffling around the back row over the center console of the car.

“What are you doing?”

“Give me a second,” Dream grunted out, trying to grab onto something.

A bit later, Dream pulled out a bag of regular M&Ms and handed them to George. "Here."

He took it hesitantly. "What is this for?" He squinted his eyes, "Are you bribing me?"

"No you idiot. It's a Christmas present. Well, a late one," Dream breathed out, slightly flushed from stretching over to the back of his car.

George sat there, the cold bag weighing heavily in his hands. A tacky red string was tied onto it, signifying to be something of a gift. He was almost at a loss for words.

"Wh- How did you know I liked these?"

Dream's face seemed to darken a slight bit. Maybe it was the lighting in the car. "You said it one time when we were leaving Ms. Davis' class after school."

Dream remembered something as small as that? George's face flushed a slight bit at the thought. He could barely recall Dream's favorite, 3 Musketeers.

George made a small mental note for the future.

"But I don't have a present for you-"

"No, no it's good. Consider it payment for that time you paid for dinner," Dream revved up the car and took a hold of the steering wheel.

"Are you sure?"

"If you really don't want it, you can just-"

George quickly shook his head, saying defensively, "No, no I want them."

Dream gave a small laugh as he began backing out of the driveway. "I'm glad," he mumbled.

George lightly gripped the bag of candy, feeling a wobbly smile draw on his face.

Both of them let the radio fill the silence between them, overplayed pop songs letting George collect himself. He let himself glance over at Dream, who was calm as he drove them down the lit up streets which were bustling to life in preparation for the new year. The last traces of Christmas were already cleaned up, with few places still lit up in its festive colors.

Lights passing by illuminated bits of Dream's face, shadows and lamp lights passing seconds at a time. His hair was a nice, light brown, with some wisps of gold thrown into it that glowed slightly.

George needed to stop staring so much.

He turned away, hoping that the passing sights would help him.

They didn't.

Getting to Sapnap's house was stressful to say the least. Giving George the bag of M&Ms had caused Dream's heart rate to spike about ten times, and it took the entire drive just to calm down.

He could swear that there were dents in the steering wheel from the way he gripped it.

Walking into Sapnap's house, he felt as stiff as a board. Worries that George would think he was creepy or weird still filled his head, and he had to will himself to focus on the party.

Once he was inside with George, he got more than enough raised eyebrows and elbow nudges from Karl and Sapnap, who he repeatedly brushed off. His eyes hurt from rolling them so many times, and his face felt as if it was burnt at the number of times his face flushed with their questioning gazes.

He had to go into the bathroom and splash water on his face, hoping the heat in his face would fade. Taking a deep breath after staring himself down in the mirror, he walked out, sleeves damp and cheeks slightly cooler.

Across the living room in the corner, Dream spotted George bickering with Karl; The two's high pitched giggles could be heard across the room. He couldn't help but smile fondly, before quickly shaking his head and walking over.

Dream settled onto the carpet next to the sofa where George and Karl sat, and he bundled himself in the multitudes of blankets and pillows Sapnap had provided. Watching as Sapnap chucked a pillow at George from across the living room, Dream laughed at George as he flailed around to catch the pillow, both he and the pillow ultimately landing on the floor with a small poff.

Quietly, Dream let himself survey the room. Besides the four of them, quite a few other people were there. Friends of friends of friends were gathered, and all in all about fifteen people were huddled nicely into the cozy living room.

Once they were all settled, everyone voted on movies to watch to pass the time. After some discourse, they came to the conclusion to watch Disney movies, with Sapnap's suggestion to watch shitty Netflix horror movies in a close second.

"Ok, we're watching Princess and the Frog everyone. I don't take criticisms," Sapnap huffed out, still slightly salty.

No objections were made, and the lights were turned off, leaving the TV to swathe the room in a soft light.

As the movie went on, Dream found it hard to concentrate, finding himself constantly aware of George's every move beside him. George wasn't even doing anything to him, and Dream was worried about doing something stupid.

The him from six months ago would've been ashamed.

Eventually, the credits rolled out by 11:27 P.M. and everyone was still as restless as ever. Groaning as the lights were flicked on, the group in the living room tried to adjust their eyes and wake up their sleeping body parts.

Lazily getting up from his comfortable spot within the blankets he'd capitalized, Dream let his eyes flick over to George, who had apparently fallen half asleep during the movie. He poked him a few times, letting him get up and yawn a slight bit. There was a cowlick in his hair from the way he slept on the cushions, light red marks glowed lightly where the pillow's patterns dented his face.

Would he admit the sight was funny? Yes.

Would he admit it was also endearing? No.

Dream let out a snicker, earning a hard earned whack on his shoulder, courtesy of George.

Within the living room, things began to settle once again. People were on their phones or talking with the others over cups of hot chocolate that Sapnap had made right after the movie ended. Dream wasn't really close with anyone there, except for Sapnap, Karl, and George. He didn't want to intrude on a conversation, and it was fine since he didn't really mind the silence in the corner.

Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed George slip on his jacket and scarf as he went to go out to the back porch quietly.

Something tugged at Dream, maybe his intuition or his will. He grabbed two cups of hot chocolate, slipped on his jacket, and followed.

Stepping outside, he shivered slightly as he left the warm air inside. A beautiful half moon greeted his arrival.

"Here," Dream handed a cup of hot chocolate to George, who was sitting quietly on a cushioned seat next to an empty fire pit.

George took the cup gratefully, "Thanks." He took a small sip, burning himself in the process.

Laughing, Dream sat next to him on the sofa George was currently on, taking his own sip of hot chocolate. He let out a hiss at the burning liquid, prompting George to laugh right back.

"Why'd you come out here?" George asked, a frosty breath following his words.

"Shouldn't I be asking you that?"

George let out a small chuckle. "I dunno. Just kind of got bored I guess. You?"

"Well, me too then."

Laughing again, "What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means," Dream took a more careful sip of hot chocolate, the warmth spreading throughout him, "I was also bored."

George gave a small hum, sarcastically nodding a slight bit.

A silence settles between them. Frosty breaths and the steams of hot chocolate rose and faded into the air. Dream looks over at George, who was holding his cup close to his face. He noticed a small scar that could be seen on his left knuckle.

Dream points at it and asks curiously, "What's that from?"

Startled, George followed Dream's eyes to his hand. "Oh, this? It's a scar I got when I was really little. I was running around outside and tripped on my shoe laces, and I ended up scratching my hand really badly." He laughed a bit as he looked at the sky, reliving the memory.

"Oh wow, nice to know that little-George is just as stupid as present-George."

George elbowed him lightly, furrowing his eyebrows as he laughed. "Tell me something about you then. It could be stupid, I dunno. I won't judge because I'm not a total asshole."

Dream gave a hum of doubt. "Well, I suck at ping pong."

“Really?”

“Mhm, really. Now your turn.”

“I used to have a goldfish when I was seven. It died literally two days after I got it and we flushed him down the toilet,” George laughed into his cup, “I was devastated.”

“Well, I . . .,” Dream trailed off as he began to think, “I can hula hoop.”

“My middle finger is double jointed.”

“I can wiggle my ears.”

“I can juggle.”

Dream stopped in surprise for a second. “Wait really?”

“Yes, really,” George briefly glanced around the porch, “Too bad there isn’t anything I could use. But I can.”

Dream took a small sip of his hot chocolate, and it still burnt his tongue a slight bit. “Hm, I guess I’ll just have to take your word for it.”

George gave a small giggle and started to blow on his hot chocolate. Dream let him, and he waited.

He lets a comfortable silence settle between them. Slowly, Dream let himself meld into that silence, the peaceful environment blending with the undisturbed night sky above them.

“Well?”

It surprises Dream. “Well, what?”

“It’s your turn.”

Dream blinks. “Oh, yeah sorry,” He pauses for a second, “Ok, you can’t tell anyone this, ok? Not even Sapnap knows.”

Nodding slightly, George watched him intently, waiting for whatever thing he was going to say.

“I am terrified of heights.”

A blink. And then two. And then, George keels over laughing.

Dream feels his face flush. “What? Why are you laughing?”

“You-” George manages through wheezes, “Are afraid of heights? Dream? Is afraid of heights?”

“It’s totally reasonable!”

“Then why haven’t you told Sapnap?”

“Because knowing him, he’d somehow manage to get me up onto my roof in my sleep.”

George lets out another set of laughs, and it draws Dream in. He can’t help but smile too.

“Sorry, sorry I just thought it was funny,” George chuckled out, the last laugh making Dream’s heart flutter in the most childish way possible.

He looked away, unable to look at George in the face without feeling a rising heat within his chest.

“Well, I can’t think of a lot, my mind is just blanking out for some reason,” George paused to think, light wisps of frosted breath coming from his lips. “Ah, I’m a moderator on this one minecraft server.”

“Woah, that’s actually. . . pretty cool.”

George lets out a playful huff. “It is pretty cool. Now you.”

“Hm,” Dream has to think too. His mind feels empty the one moment he needs it most. “I think I want to become an English major.”

A thoughtful hum. “Really now?”

He tilts his head towards the sky. “Yeah. It’s something I’ve been thinking about for a while now.”

“This might be a kind of dumb question to ask, but are you any good? At writing that is.”

“Yeah, I think I’m pretty good. There’s always more to improve on though.”

“You should write something for me.”

Dream’s voice dies out, “Hm, maybe.” It feels like a thousand degrees outside.

“I’m kidding, I’m kidding,” George lets out a hearty laugh, and his grin spreads right to Dream. He pointed cheekily at him, saying, “You looked as if you wanted to die just now.”

“Like I said,” Dream mutters, “maybe.”

George sat up a little straighter, “Wait, really?”

“Yeah.”

“Cool.”

“Cool.”

Tensely, he let his eyes drift back to George’s face, and it felt as if time had frozen.

It was a cliched sight really.

George’s smile was as bright as the moon above them, and his hair was still untamed in some spots from laying on that pillow for so long. His lips, a light crimson from the cold air around them, were almost hypnotizing. Cheeks flushed and eyes crinkled, George looked beautiful.

It was an unsolicited thought that, for once, Dream didn’t regret thinking.

Hearing the voices from inside begin to count down the numbers to New Year’s, Dream raised his glass slowly, waiting for George to do the same. Both of them began to count in unison with the muffled sounds of the people inside.

They watched each other as they counted, and Dream couldn’t find it in himself to look away.

“Five. . .”

He’s so close.

“Four. . .”

Dream wants to reach out and touch his hair.

“Three. . .”

He wants to cup his flushed face in his hands.

“Two. . .”

He wants so much.

“One!” Both of them cheer out, “Happy New Years!”

They put their cups together, a small clink ringing out.

“Here’s to another year,” George grins.

Dream follows, “Another good year.”

They both down their hot chocolate in a dramatic manner, finishing with a gasp after emptying their glasses. It’s so stupidly childish the way they giggled about clinking glasses. It’s unbelievable how willing they were to share the stupidest facts about each other. It’s absurd how much they’re laughing about it.

Dream doesn’t think he’d rather do it with anyone else.

He’s happy here, next to George on the very first day of the new year.

George gives him another bright smile, illuminating Dream. His heart aches a little at how much he feels.

Looking at him, he just smiles back.

It was going to be a good year.

Chapter End Notes

happy new years!! to everyone whos read this by 12

writing this fic has honestly been one of the highlights of 2020 and i was really surprised with all the support ive gotten for it

im really grateful for the safe space this community's given me and a lot of other people too

thank you so much for everyone whos stuck with me through this hell of a slow burn fic

i cant wait to write more and i hope you guys'll like it! <3

oh yeah i also made a twt for updates nd stuff :0 <https://twitter.com/alofffie>

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

A nice nap under the sun.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You finished fixing that snippet right? The one I told you about?”

Dream sighed, irritation and annoyance in his tone, “Which one? There’s a lot y’know.”

Almost immediately, Dream pursed his lips. “Sorry about that. I’m just kind of tired. . . I guess,” He apologized, slumping into the cushions of the sofa.

George gave him an understanding smile as he leaned over to his laptop. “It’s fine,” He scrolled through the code and highlighted a few lines, “Fix this last bit, and we can take a break. That’s good with you?”

“Yeah that works,” Dream said, giving a soft smile back.

It was a sunny afternoon, the two hard at work at Dream’s house as the deadline began closing in. The two of them liked being punctual, in that they would have some extra time to review before the due date. However, this one idea in particular was giving them more work than they expected. Day and night, the two scoured the code for errors, and thus they always left their sessions together in exhaustion.

Ten minutes later, Dream slumped into his sofa, giving a sigh in triumph. “I think that should do it. Hopefully.”

George laughed and handed a glass of water over to Dream, who downed it quickly.

“Hopefully. I guess we’ll just have to find out next time we run it,” George said, taking a small sip of water.

Dream gave a tired mumble, “Yeah.”

The two rested on the same couch in the living room, warm sunlight filtering in through the blinds. Patches lay on the carpet, peacefully sleeping and sunbathing.

“So, why are you so tired? Homework?” George asked as he set down his cup.

When he arrived that morning, George heard the drowsiness in Dream’s voice. He noticed that he’d had eyebags once he got into the living room. He’d seen the way Dream’s head had dropped a few times, before nodding back up in confusion.

“Yeah,” Dream yawned, “Mr. Peterson needs to realize that we don’t need to write 750 word long essays on every single piece of text in our textbooks. Same goes for Ms. Fairway.”

“I can get that. It’s really stupid how much work they’re dumping on us right now. I literally have three tests this Friday,” George yawned back, “So much for timing, right?”

“Haha, yeah,” Dream chuckled.

It went without saying that both he and Dream were tired. George had hoped the entire time that his sleepiness wasn’t too noticeable the entire time, even if he nodded off twice. After seeing Dream, however, he realized that it wouldn’t be too much of a problem.

George let himself glance over at Dream, who was slowly falling into sleep. Slumped against the couch, his eyelashes were golden in the sunlight. Soft brown freckles were light against his skin. Soft, parted lips gave way to slow breaths.

He didn’t want to let himself get caught staring, but he noticed the way Dream’s eyes fluttered closed and then opened, before eventually they remained shut. George pursed his lips as he began reaching over to wake him up.

As he was inches away from his arm, George pulled his hand back. He knew how tired Dream was, and it showed in every way that he moved and talked that day. They weren’t gonna get anywhere in terms of coherent writing if he was that tired.

Leaving him asleep was 100% for the benefit of the project.

Letting himself slump against the couch again, George let his eyes scan Dream’s face again.

His expression was calm. Normally furrowed brows were relaxed. Lips drawn into snarky laughs were resting softly. Wide, observing eyes were gently closed.

It was a serene expression that George knew he’d never get to see again.

His heart fluttered and ached at the sight. It was endearing how tired he was, chest rising and falling with each slow exhale and inhale.

George had come to so many revelations over the past few months. While he didn’t want to make or have a solid feeling as to what he felt around Dream, he couldn’t deny that there was something there - burning, searing into him.

The same emotions he’d been feeling kept tugging at his heart strings the longer he looked at Dream.

Quietly, George shifted forward on the couch, lifting his laptop from the coffee table to rest it on his legs. He’d work on the code some more and then maybe finish extra work for his other classes. George cracked his knuckles, settled back into the couch, and began to scroll through the lines and lines of code.

Upon sinking back into the sofa, Dream’s body slowly began to tilt. In fact, it began tilting right towards George. He could only sit, frozen, as Dream’s head rested on his shoulder, upper body barely at an angle.

“Oh god, Dream?” George squeaked out. His face was burning.

No response. Only light breathing and sighs came.

“Dream?” He whispered again.

George gulped as he sat still, afraid to wake Dream up. His heart rate was spiking and he didn't think he could handle Dream sleeping on his shoulder. At this rate, George was going to spontaneously combust into nothing, and Dream would lose his partner for CodeWorld.

At a snail's pace, George tried to shift Dream up off his shoulder before realizing Dream was too heavy and his own arms were at way too awkward of a position to do so.

George tried whispering his name again, but to no avail. His voice kept cracking anyways, so maybe it was for the better.

Almost ten minutes later did George decide that waking up Dream, so that he could get off him, wasn't worth it. He let himself tensely sink back into the sofa cushions, a weight now resting on his shoulder.

The entire time, George's face had been constantly running at some burning degrees, and he felt as if he was melting the entire time. Every site of contact between the two of them radiated a searing heat.

Looking over at Dream again, George's heart tightened a little. His hair was soft, the golden brown gently brushing George's shoulder. He could feel each movement Dream made, from small shifts in his arms to his rising and falling chest. He smelled of vanilla, the soft scent making George's head spin a little.

Only then did he spot Dream's hand, peacefully resting in the small space between their legs on the sofa. George resisted the sudden urge to hold it, wondering how they would lock their hands together. Would it feel nice? Comforting, even?

George lightly bit the inside of his cheek.

Just because he was thinking those things doesn't mean Dream would want to do the same. It was risky and if Dream woke up with their hands interlocked, George didn't know how he'd react.

Taking a deep breath, George got to work on his laptop, hoping and wishing that he'd get comfortable with the asleep Dream, peacefully oblivious to the things he was doing to George's heart.

He was tired. It was hazy.

Slowly, Dream blinked his eyes open.

What time was it? Did he sleep for a whole day? Where was he?

Those questions slowly floated around his brain, still wading through the murky understanding of his surroundings.

Before shifting to sit up, he felt a weight atop his head. A soft one.

Glancing up, he was met with the sight of George peacefully sleeping on him. Apparently, he was also sleeping on George's shoulder.

Dream's eyes widened, and he tried to stay calm. He didn't want to wake up George, but oh god

was his face heating up.

George's laptop, sitting on George's legs, had long turned off. The lights outside had moved, the sun having changed positions in the time he slept.

He was, or at least had been, asleep on George's shoulder. His face was flushed, and he felt the heat rise on his cheeks. Dream's heart was screaming at him, and his guts were doing flips. The feeling in his chest was glaring as he became acutely aware of his surroundings.

Without meaning to, Dream had shifted and bumped his leg into George's. Slowly stirring, George sat up and yawned.

It seemed to take him a second too to comprehend their positions.

"Oh, uh- Ok sorry about that," George scrambled up, almost knocking his laptop to the floor.

Dream felt his heart rate pick up as he tried to form words. "No, wait I'm sorry- uh-"

"I just- I just didn't want to wake you up or anything and so-"

"I fell asleep on you?"

George nodded in confirmation as he stood on the other side of the coffee table.

"Oh I'm really sorry-," Dream put his hand to his forehead, annoyed with his own incompetence. He couldn't believe that he was that tired to-

"No, it's good!" George almost shouted, waving his hands to shake off Dream's apology.

"What?"

"I meant," George cleared his throat, and spoke quieter, "I didn't mind. You were tired and I just didn't wanna bother you or anything. I was really tired too so. . . yeah."

"Oh."

"Mhm."

Dream felt frozen on the couch. How was he supposed to take that? Did club partners let other people sleep on their shoulders? Was it considered intimate or just friendly?

Suddenly, George clapped his hands together. "O-kay, I think I should get going!"

Dream shuffled around his papers, his mind still foggy as he thought of the events just then. "Yeah, yeah. I'll grab my keys and we can go."

The entire drive to George's house was quiet. Extremely quiet.

Dream hadn't dared to say anything, or at least anything more about the events earlier. When he glanced over at George, he saw him quietly staring out the window.

"What?"

"What?" Dream asked, startled.

"You were staring at me."

"I was just distracted. Sorry," Dream said, laughing it off.

"Are you-," George cleared his throat, "Are you still thinking about earlier?"

"Wh- Ahaha, Why would I be?"

"I know that look in your face."

"What look? I don't have a look."

"That one where you're thinking really hard about something," George propped his head up on his hand and knee, "And your eyebrows are all furrowed- like this."

Dream laughed a bit, chuckling at George's poor rendition of his so-called "Thinking Face". His heart did that thing when he saw the way George pouted and mimicked him.

"I do not."

"Do too."

"I don't."

"But *were* you thinking about what happened earlier?"

Dream opened his mouth to form an excuse, or some kind of lie. Even so, nothing would come out.

"See, I knew it."

"Ok, maybe I was thinking about it," Dream pursed his lips. "I'm sorry. I invaded your personal space like that, and I was really tir-"

"I told you it's fine."

"Are you sure?"

"If you weren't driving right now, I'd punch you," George leaned back into the passenger seat, "It's fine, so stop worrying about it, ok?"

Even so, Dream pursed his lips, afraid to push further but still hung up about before. Was George really fine with it, or was he just saying it to make him feel better?

By the time they arrived at George's house, Dream was still on edge. Staring at the dashboard, he felt himself get stuck within his thoughts, his anxiety gnawing away at him.

A soft bonk on his head snapped him out of it.

"What was that for?"

"Stop worrying, oh my god," George rolled his eyes as he slipped out of the car. "It was a nice nap, so don't worry about it."

"But seriously, I didn't bother you or anything?"

George just rolled his eyes, giving a smile. "I told you it's fine. Stop worrying about it, you dumbass."

Dream gave a lopsided smile back, rubbing his neck. "If you say so," He said, sighing in

acceptance, “Thanks for letting me use you as a pillow, I guess.”

“Pfft, whatever,” George laughed, “Bye Dream. Get some rest.”

“I’ll try.”

George waved at him as he went up his driveway and Dream just waved back, feeling his arm go weak.

Driving back, Dream let himself breathe a small sigh of relief, slowly accepting that George really was fine with what happened. Eventually, Dream’s heart began to ache at remembering that afternoon, no longer plagued with his doubts and worries.

The feeling of George’s hair on his. The nice way they managed to fit so nicely. The warmth against his side.

Those senses lingered in the back of his mind.

Dream admitted in the back of his mind that he’d like to do it again.

And maybe, just maybe, he’d let himself think that George felt that way too.

Once he got inside, George screamed into his pillow for a solid five minutes.

Chapter End Notes

cliche falling-asleep-on-other-person's-shoulder fic for the soul

hope u guys liked this chapter!

as always, any comments, questions, or criticisms are appreciated! <3

tw: @alofffie

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Dream does a little writing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Okay, let’s get through this meeting now, shall we?” Ms. Davis asked, setting down her cup as she clasped her hands together.

In a few moments, packets and papers and laptops were pulled out in a flurry, and they all got to work.

As quickly as one hour could go by, the three of them evaluated each requirement put forth by the tournament challenge, ensuring that nothing would disqualify their entry. Every item was reviewed almost three times, anxieties pushing them to make sure everything ran smoothly. It was only after a few more test runs did they decide to call it a day, fairly sure that the project was in order.

“Thank you for your hard work you guys,” Ms. Davis sent them off, “We’ll do one final check next week, and then we’re off to compete!”

“Thanks, Ms. Davis,” Dream and George waved back, making their way down the quiet corridors of their school.

Stretching upwards, Dream yawned slowly as he and George walked side by side.

“Any plans after school?” George asked.

Giving a small hum of thought, “Not that I know of. I might go get frozen yogurt since Sapnap hitched a ride from Karl.”

Since who knows when, days passed where Karl and Sapnap would jump to Dream’s car without explanations, using him as an impromptu uber to get them where they wanted to be, or spontaneously leave together without any notice. Dream didn’t mind though; Some of the car rides home were just a little quieter than they normally would be.

“Frozen yogurt? In this weather?”

Just as George had mentioned it, they stepped outside and a chilly breeze swept past them.

Giving a shrug, Dream pulls out and swings his keys around his finger. “Why not?”

“Ah, shit!” George bites his tongue, squinting his eyes closed.

Dream laughs at him, “Brainfreeze?”

George gives a strained nod, trying to wait out the pain.

They’re together in his car, after having driven to get frozen yogurt and with neither of them really wanting to eat in the shop. The noisy AC and the painfully silent air of the empty store would’ve driven any other customer to do the same.

Dream watches George finally relax, the stinging in his brain having probably gone away. Not long after, however, George took another large spoonful of yogurt--a painfully stupid move that enabled another wash of pain.

Laughing again, Dream just sits there as he watches the playful cycle continue.

“Stop laughing you idiot!” George whines, gripping his spoon.

“You’re the one that keeps eating these huge spoonfuls of yogurt!” Dream wheezes out. “You think you’d learn, but nope.”

“I can’t help it!” George settles back in his seat. “I just keep forgetting, okay?”

There’s a doubtful laugh. “Uh-huh.”

Upon saying that, George spitefully ate a smaller bite of yogurt, making sure that Dream saw it.

Scoffing, Dream just rolled his eyes and continued on with his cup. As he made his way through the swirls of yogurt, Dream glanced to his side, watching George continue to slowly make his way through his yogurt, actively trying not to eat too large of a bite.

It was endearing in a way but in a stupidly endearing kind of way.

George would shake off some parts of the yogurt he’d scooped up, trying to slim the amount that he’d eat. And if he didn’t do that, he’d barely put any yogurt in his mouth at all, eating bits of red, pink, and white in the smallest bites.

Unconsciously, Dream smiles.

It’s another few minutes as they both finish their yogurt, cheesy pop-songs playing quietly from the radio. Dream was, unsurprisingly, the first to finish, setting down his cup with a dulled clack against the center console of his car.

“So.”

“So,” George mumbles out after a bite.

The momentary silence makes Dream realize he doesn’t have anything to talk about, and he fumbles. “Oh, well,” He glances out the window and props his arm on the armrest, “Nice weather, huh?”

George gives him a look that says, *Are you serious?* and he bursts out in a sputter of laughter.

““ Nice weather, huh? ”” George mimics.

“That is such a bullshit accent, oh my god.”

“Not as bad as your bullshit conversation starter.”

Dream purses his lips in a smile. “Touche.”

George takes another bite, and his face lights up in thought. “Say. . .”

Humming, Dream waits for George to continue.

“When are you gonna write that thing for me?”

“What thing?”

“Well, rather *some* thing.”

Dream thinks, and he pulls out blanks. He repeats, “What thing?”

“On New Year’s.”

He thinks again, and it hits him.

“You should write something for me.”

“Hm, maybe.”

“I’m kidding, I’m kidding. You looked as if you wanted to die just now.”

“Like I said, maybe.”

“Wait, really?”

“Yeah.”

Oh. That thing.

“Well, it depends. What do you want me to write?” Dream chuckles, and he hopes his nerves will settle, “I’m not Shakespeare y’know, and it’s more of like a recreational thing I guess. A hobby. Y’know. Nothing too serious.”

“Well, you’re obviously not Shakespeare,” George ignores his nervous stutters, for which Dream is grateful for, and hums in thought.

Dream shuts his mouth, not really trusting himself to say any other words that could result in him looking like an absolute dolt. A few pauses later, George finally shrugs.

“I dunno. Surprise me.”

Sputtering, “Wh- How do I work with, ‘*Surprise me.*’?”

“Just have fun with it, and don’t think too much,” George laughs, and he knocks his fingers lightly against Dream’s forehead. “You and I both know that’s something you do way too often.”

Reduced to nothing but a cough and flushed cheeks, Dream revs the car to life. “You’re the one who thinks too much.”

Rolling his eyes, George gives him a smile. “Don’t worry about it. I’ll probably like whatever you write no matter what, okay?”

Dream glances at him, and there’s a genuine look of comfort on George’s face. His heart melts a little.

“We’ll see.”

His floor’s disappeared by now.

There are papers in crumples scattered across the ground, and his laptop sits on his desk, screaming at him to finally be shut off. Dream can’t decide if it should be a hand-written piece or something that’s typed out.

Would something written feel more genuine? Even so, typing it out is quicker and easier, but less personal in a sense.

He mulls over it for minutes and minutes on end, shuffling around in thought. He paces, and he walks around what could be called his carpet, now nothing more than abandoned papers. He ruffles his hair as if it was going to freshen his thoughts. He looks up and down, hoping to find some inspiration from his walls or ceiling.

Dream has no idea as to what the story should be about, much less how long it should be.

“Surprise me.”

Scoffing, he huffs in exasperation. Dream shoves himself back into his chair, spinning in weak circles as he stared at the ceiling futilely.

Think, think, think.

For the past hour, he’d been slowly trying to form cohesive thoughts as to what to write. And as time went on, it was obvious that that wasn’t going to happen.

He half-heartedly picks up his phone, hoping that there would be some mark of inspiration to hit him.

As he scrolls, he zones out as flashes of words pass his eyes.

What can he write the best about? What does he want to write about? What would George like?

It’s like a school writing assignment, but so much worse. It’s as if the teacher gave him no prompt, no guidelines, no theme, no set genre, and just nothing in general.

Just the simple words of, “Surprise me.”

And that very assignment was going to be graded in front of the most judgemental people who would pick it apart piece by piece.

Okay, not that specific and not that drastic, but Dream’s anxieties continued to build up the horrendously painful outcomes of writing something even merely unsatisfactory.

He sat for a few more minutes just pondering and contemplating, but he could pull nothing out of the void that was his head. All along, he felt his mind spiral downwards, and he just watched it fall, not really sure as to what else to do.

In an act of what could be called desperation and in the spur of the moment, Dream texted George, hoping for any kind of recommendation or specificity he could work with.

6:09 P.M.

Dream: Hey

George: hey

Dream: Having a little trouble writing that thing

George: really?

Dream: Yeah

Dream: How do u expect me to work with “surprise me”

George: uh hmmm

Dream: Just give me a theme or something

George: just write something from the heart :)

Dream lets out a breath in a laugh.

Dream: From the heart?????

Dream: What in the hell is that supposed to mean

George: it doesn't have to be anything too big yknow

George: it's not like i'm asking for a 50 page essay

Dream: I still don't know what u mean by write from the heart

George: something u like maybe? like a hobby or a sport

Dream: Lmao like i'm gonna write about the wonders of coding

George: u know what i mean

George: i just wanna see what ur writing is like

Dream: Then just look at my like 100 english essays i've written

George: no no no like something u wrote for me

Dream: oooooo getting bold now are we

George: shut up

Dream: But i'll see

George: don't overthink it

Dream: Easier said than done

Dream lets his head fall back, letting his arms hang from the side of his chair.

Something he likes, huh?

"Dude."

"Hm?"

"I called your name, like, five times."

Dream blinked a few times as he ate some more fries. "Oh sorry, I was thinking about some other stuff."

Together, Dream and Sapnap were sitting in Dream's car, quietly munching away at soggy McDonald's food.

Sapnap laughed and mumbled in between bites, "Thinking about what?"

Giving a long hum in contemplation, "I don't know if I wanna tell you."

"What—Oh come on Dream," Sapnap pouts. "Tell me."

"Hmm," Another fry gets dipped into ketchup. "I dunno."

"Pleaaase."

"Hmm."

Sapnap whines a little more. "Come on, you gotta tell me."

Still hesitating, Dream says nothing. Even so, it's futile to hope that Sapnap will drop the subject.

"What is it? Work? Family stuff?" Suddenly Sapnap's face lights up in thought, and Dream knows immediately what he's about to say. "Or is it. . . a certain someone?"

Looking away, Dream only gives an incoherent sputter in response.

"I knew it!" Sapnap laughs. "So who is it? George?"

The blunt way it comes out slaps Dream in the face; his eyes grew wide like a deer in headlights.

“How—What?”

“You’re thinking about him?”

“It’s because of something I need to do.” It comes out a little faster than Dream would like it to.

“What is it?” Sapnap motions with an oil soaked fry, “And how is it related to George?”

A small inhale. “Well, okay, so you know how I like writing right?”

Sapnap nods.

“I said I’d, uh,” Dream twirls a soggy fry in between his fingers, “Write something. For George.”

“Oh.”

“And I’m just not sure on what to write.”

There’s only a split second, and it’s obvious that Sapnap just says what he thinks. “A love letter.”

“A what?” Dream coughs out.

Sapnap is blunt. Too blunt sometimes.

“Be serious about this,” says Dream, feeling a smile creep onto his face at the way Sapnap was doubled over in laughter.

“I am serious!”

“Well-”

“You like him, don’t you?”

“Wh—I—well,” He rubs his neck. The heat that rushes onto his face makes him dizzy.

“Do you?”

Sapnap’s gaze is piercing, and Dream has to think.

So, for the first time, Dream let himself reflect, the words boiling on his tongue.

It’s a question the Dream knows he has the answer to, somewhere buried deep inside of his subconscious. He knows it should be easy to say, but is it really?

What does it mean to like someone? To truly like someone?

Laying on their shoulder underneath the sun on a Saturday afternoon? Driving them to a restaurant in outfits that are completely wildly unfit for the occasion? Wanting to intertwine his hands in their hair? Sharing interests without any judgement? Comforting them after a bad dream? Enjoying their company even if nothing was said?

Dream must have stayed too silent as Sapnap just gave a small smile, and his voice is quieter.

“It’s okay if you don’t know.”

But, for once, Dream wants to know.

Dream hesitates, “I think. . . I do.”

“Really?”

Nodding, “I think I do. I just don’t know how to word it. I just--I don’t know.”

And it’s true. Dream can’t find the words to describe it--the feelings he has when he’s around George.

Sapnap pats him on the back, settling a comforting hand on Dream’s shoulder. “Sorry about pushing man. It’s fine if you can’t give an answer right now.”

Giving a nod back, Dream’s grateful. A few moments pass, and Sapnap clasps his hands together, voice quickly changing to wave off the thick air. “Alright, I think it’s about time I get back.”

Turning the car on, “You got something to do?”

“Yeah, Karl and I are gonna play Smash tonight.”

As they drive, Dream gives a sly grin. “Speaking of Karl, are you guys, like, y’know. . .”

It takes Sapnap only a millisecond to realize what he’s implying, and his voice pitches. “What the hell dude!”

“Oh,” says Dream in fake realization, “so you like him.”

And so back and forth they bicker, Sapnap's face changing in warm shades and Dream laughing all the while.

Dream’s at his desk again, albeit now cleaner with fresh paper. The warm lamp engulfs the paper that sits freshly on his desk. Staring and sitting, he exhales and lets himself think again.

“Something you like.”

“A love letter.”

“You like him, don’t you?”

“I just don’t know how to word it.”

It hits him, washing over him in almost an instant. Right as Dream grabs his pencil, he stops himself.

Does he really want to write this?

Flashes of emotions and feelings he’s felt phased past him:

The soft touch of hands. The small glances he’d catch. The jumps in his heart. The pitchy laughs he’d hear. The rising heat on his cheeks. The smiles on his face.

There’s only one answer Dream can think of: Yes, he does.

Dream sets his pencil to the paper, and he writes.

Chapter End Notes

a very dream-centric chapter this time!

please excuse the scuffed text portion, i had no idea on what to do

sorry about the lack of updates, i hope i can get back on track soon :)

but as always, i hope you enjoyed this chapter, and questions, comments, and criticisms are all welcome <3

twit for updates and stupid thoughts: [@aloffie](#)

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Taking care of competition nerves.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Lines and lines of code passed George's eyes as he scrolled through their project's file.

He gnaws at his bottom lip and turns his head. "Dream, you fixed that glitch with the shield right?"

A nod. The bare reflection of Dream's blocky character could be seen in his eyes. "Yeah, I did."

"What about that glitch with sprinting lag?"

"That too."

"And the block breaking animation?"

"Mhm."

George pauses, but he quickly asks once again. "What about the buggy bits in the Nether? We got those all cleaned up right?"

"We did."

Ms. Davis gives a little laugh and goes over to the two. "George, have some faith in Clay over here, why don't you?"

"Yeah George," Dream interjects, "Why don't you have some faith in me?"

"I do!" George furrows his brows. "I'm just worried."

Giving him a soft smile, she leaned against the wall. "It's good to be worried--"

"And I am."

--But, you need to relax a little. You don't wanna walk into the interview room sitting as stiff as a brick, now do you?"

George only gives an exasperated huff in response, turning back and once again flitting through the file.

Ms. Davis shakes her head lightly, and walks out the room. "Well, I'll leave you two to it. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Barely taking note, George stares down the letters and numbers that occupy his screen. Dream looks over and claps a hand on his shoulder, startling him.

“Ow!”

“There’s no way that hurt.”

Pouting, “Well it didn’t, but it surprised me.”

“You gotta relax dude.”

“You make it sound so easy,” his eyes don’t leave the screen, “It has to be perfect.”

“I know, I know,” Dream gives a playful huff. “But don’t keep thinking about it like this. You’re gonna get, like, sick or something if you keep panicking about it like this.”

“Yeah right. As if.”

Dream flicked him in the shoulder, causing him to jump again.

“What the hell Dream!”

“Worrying about it like this isn’t good for you. I think we did a good job, and everything should be fine.”

George gives him a doubtful look, and purses his lips. “I know we did a good job. It’s us. Just, what if something goes wrong?”

“Well-”

Ms. Davis walks in, and there’s a girl with a camera. “I hope George’s gotten rid of his nerves and that you two are just about finished, because we need to take pictures for the school yearbook.”

The two were reluctantly dragged up to the front of the room and placed side by side with Ms. Davis right behind them.

After a few waves of her hand and scooting, the girl clicked her camera and left.

Laughing, Ms. Davis turned to the two of them. “Well that was quick. She was a little eager to leave, huh?”

George sighed, “I think I blinked.”

Both Dream and Ms. Davis laughed, knowing George’s notorious ability to look awful in any photo he was in.

“Well besides that,” she checked her watch, “I believe it’s time for you two to get going.”

George was hesitant, obvious that he wanted to keep working, but began putting away his things anyways.

As they packed up their stuff, she continued. “I sent out emails to both of you for things you’ll bring this weekend along with the competition schedule.”

Dream checked his phone and gave her a nod in confirmation.

“Thanks Ms. Davis,” they said in unison as they walked out.

“Thanks for your hard work, and,” she stopped them, “Have some faith in your own project okay?”

You both worked hard and I have confidence that you'll both do great this year."

There's a genuine smile on her face, and they accept the compliment. Even so, as they leave, George can't help the anxiety that festers in his head.

A chilly February breeze swept past Dream's ankles, biting at his skin and causing him to shiver.

"This is what you get for wearing khaki shorts in this weather," George snorts.

"Shut up. The weatherman lied to me."

"Uh-huh."

The past week had gone by in a flash, barely giving Dream the time to mentally prepare himself for the competition on Sunday. Their meeting on Monday had barely given him a peace of mind, but, even more so, George seemed the most on edge out of the two of them.

Dream glanced over, and George's lips were pursed, one of the more common faces Dream had seen him make the past week.

It set him off to see George's worry, written and scrawled across his face in bold ink.

Grabbing his sleeve, Dream decidedly tugged him to his car.

"Wh—What are you doing?" George asked, giving some resistance to his pulls and glancing at Bad's parked car some few feet away.

"You don't have anything to do this afternoon right?"

"No?"

Dream unlocked his car as they approached it. "Alright then, let's go somewhere and eat."

George dug his shoes into the ground. "No, no, no," he said standing firm, "We have to do a final check tonight."

His tone caused Dream to sigh, words so resolute and stubborn.

"Okay, how about this. . ."

George was ready to leave. "What?"

"If I take you to go eat somewhere this afternoon, you can't do any final checkups on the project tonight—"

"That hardly sounds like a deal to me."

"—but I'll pay for dinner, and," Dream gave a smile and a shrug, "I'll do as many 'final checks' as you want to at the hotel tomorrow before registration hits. Okay?"

There was a pause, and Dream watched as George flickered through his options, eyebrows furrowing and lips pursing.

Finally, he shoved past Dream towards the car. “I get to choose where to eat.”

Dream gave a wide smile and followed. “Fine with me.”

They’re at a park, and it’s relatively quiet. A few kids run and scream from the playground nearby, but otherwise it’s empty. Together, they ate away at their sandwiches in the small gazebo of the park.

Dream took a sip of his soda as he looked over at George, and it was obvious that the project was still the only thing occupying his mind.

He clapped his hand on George’s shoulder. “Stop worrying so much.”

George muffled a few words before quickly swallowing his food, and tensely said, “I can’t help it.”

“Take a breath.”

“I’m worried.”

“So am I.”

“It’s just that—”

He took a bite out of his sandwich, and Dream watched him process his thoughts and food at the same time.

Partially mumbled and partially expressed, “I’m just worried. Like what if something goes wrong. What if there’s something we didn’t catch? It’ll reflect so poorly—”

He swallowed and took another bite.

“—on us. There are those guys from Oak Central, remember? God, they make full marks every single time. And I heard there are people from out of state coming in too. It’ll make the competition so much harder, my god--”

A rushed sip of water.

“—And it’s just—”

“Slow down,” Dream said, setting the cup down for him.

“Just. . .,” George took a breath. “What if we didn’t do well?”

He gives Dream a look, and it’s etched with anxieties.

“God, I know this isn’t gonna sound like much,” Dream gives a small chuckle, “But I think you—*we* did well.”

“I do too, it’s just—”

Dream holds up a finger, “Hey, I’m not done.”

George shuts his mouth reluctantly.

“We put so much work into it. I don’t think I know anyone who deserves it more than you.”

“Us, you mean.”

“Yeah, yeah, us,” Dream cracks a smile. “And if anyone else wins, we’ll just, like, steal the trophy or something.”

George sputters out in small laugh, exclaiming, “Wh—We can’t do that Dream, what the hell!”

“I dunno, can’t we?”

Lightly elbowing Dream’s shoulder, George chuckles, “We’d get disqualified for misconduct, you idiot.”

“Not if we don’t get caught.”

George lets out another giggle, spouting all the possible timelines where they’d end up losing because of that absurd plan. With every word, the pent up concerns George had slowly trickled away.

Dream just keeps going, throwing out all the things they’d do to not lose—None of which would fly with George, obviously.

Finally, George took moment to stop and sip his water, throat dry after talking about an incident from the year before where a student had irresponsibly left competition grounds and gotten disqualified.

“Feel better?”

George looked almost surprised. “Oh. You’re such an idiot,” he scoffs as a cheesy smile grows wide on Dream’s face.

“Well? Do you?”

“A little, yeah.”

There’s a small pause. “I’ll try not to lose sleep over it.”

As he turned to eat, Dream flicked George’s forehead just as he took a bite into his sandwich.

“What the hell was that for?” He mumbled out.

“Keep frowning and you’ll get wrinkles,” Dream snickered.

“I’m not frowning?” George furrowed his brows, making Dream laugh again.

“Uh-huh.”

George whacked him over the head. “Shut up.”

“So, promise me you won’t look over the file tonight?”

“I mean—”

“George.”

He grumbles. “Alright, okay fine. I won’t look at it.”

“Promise?”

George says it reluctantly, but it’s good enough for Dream. “Promise.”

“We’re gonna do great, okay?”

George huffs. “Of course we are.”

There’s a soft smile on both their faces when he says it.

He drums his fingers impatiently against the steering wheel. Anxiously, Dream sits in his car outside of George’s house, ready to pick him up to drive over to the city where the competition was held that year. In his car he had all the necessities for their overnight stay and the competition: his laptop, suitcase with necessities for the night, among other things.

All that was left was George.

Finally stumbled out George, dragging a suitcase with his mother in the doorway.

“Good luck George!” Dream hears her call out in a muffle.

Dream gave a laugh at George's half-lidded eyes and messy bedhead he hadn’t bothered brushing out. George slowly hobbled his way over to the car, yawning as he did so.

Letting down the window, Dream rolled his eyes. “About time.”

Another short yawn, and George just tugged on the door. Dream let him in, giving a small wave to his mom as he slightly crouched into view.

“Good luck you two!” she said.

“Thank you!” Dream half-shouted across their lawn.

George just gave a tired wave to her and buckled up.

After rolling the window back up and reversing out of the driveway, Dream asked, “Ready to go?”

A sleepy nod.

Thus, they’re on their way, ready to take on Codeworld the next day.

After only five minutes of driving on the highway, George fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

gotta get out those pre-comp nerves am i right

sorry if this chapter was a little on the slow side for some of you!! i wanted to deepen the teamwork dynamic,, if that makes sense

as always, comments, criticisms, and questions are all appreciated! <3

tw: [@aloffie](#)

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The day to compete finally arrives.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Arriving at the hotel, Dream and George quickly settled into the hotel room. (George wouldn't deny that he was a little bit worried that there would only be one bed, but luckily Ms. Davis booked them a room with two.)

In the blink of an eye, it was already night and the two of them stayed clacking away at their laptops. Like Dream had promised, they did final revisions and checkups that afternoon, sweeping over every nook and cranny of their file.

A small tap on George's shoulder pulled him out of his hyper-focused state as he ran the game one more time.

"Hm?" George blinked up a few times at Dream, who stood behind him holding two cups of ramen.

"Oh, sorry about that," he chuckled, "You were so 'in-the-zone' that I didn't wanna bother you, but your ramen would've gotten cold so. . ."

"Oh it's good. I needed a break anyways," he rubbed his eyes and took the food gratefully, "Thanks."

"No problem."

Dream returned to the sofa he'd taken over while George stayed sitting at the small office desk of the room.

Spinning the chair around to face Dream, George slurped the noodles up before gesturing to Dream's laptop. "You done?" He mumbled.

"Just about."

Another bite. "Find anything?"

Dream shook his head as he kept his head low to eat the noodles. "I think it's clean."

George sighed. "I hope so."

Quickly, Dream finished the rest of his noodles and smiled at George.

"I think we're gonna do great." Dream said it with a little laugh.

There's that golden smile of his, and George can't help but smile right back.

“Yeah,” George puffs out in a trying breath of confidence, “We are.”

After all, with a smile like that, who was George to deny it?

The next morning goes by too fast.

George is up, and he’s awake before he realizes it. Dream’s pushing and shoving him out of the hotel building with a bagel, from the free breakfast bar of the hotel, still in his mouth. For a few minutes, he’s in the car sleepily eating away at his dry breakfast, and then they’re suddenly at the competition center, a small university located in the city.

They meet Ms. Davis at the front door of the registration room, officially registering with her at the front desk and then the next hour they’re going off to their interview room.

The very interview itself went by in a whirl.

Together, they walked in and then they walked out, and it’s over. George had never really noticed how simple the questions were in years prior, but maybe it was because of his constant bickering with Dream that he was subject to ignorance.

By the time George gets a grip on his surroundings, they’re walking around the city after noon, waiting for the award ceremony to roll by with three hours to spare.

Dream snickers, “What kind of advertisement is that?” He points, laughing at a billboard on a building nearby, a mindless statement on it.

George glances at it, and then glances at Dream. He almost jumps when his heart aches a little.

In years past and especially this one, George had dreaded the competition. He had his confidence all year until the month it drew close, and that was when his anxieties overtook him with a brute, unexpected force.

Hell, he’d even had a partial, anxiety stricken, breakdown of word vomit in front of Dream just a few days ago in a park.

In years past, he’d never had Dream to use as a support beam, rather a convenient distraction from his worries. Dream used to be an annoyance, no more than a pestering partner at his side to keep his mind off of the competition.

Now, he was a comforting voice next to him, making sure he didn’t stop mid-sentence during the interview and covering the mistakes he’d left behind. As much as George wanted to deny it, he was grateful.

Watching as Dream glanced at the shops lining the streets, George felt an oh-so familiar pang in his chest again.

“George look!” Dream tugs him by his sleeve, and George feels like he’s burning up and down his arm. “A frozen yogurt shop!”

A comforting voice next to him.

“Yeah,” George manages. “You wanna go?”

“Duh, why else would I be pointing and dragging you there?”

A pestering partner at his side.

“I don’t—Whatever,” George sputters and follows after him.

They go into the store, and it jingles in their presence. It’s practically empty, aside from the two employees behind the counter. Dream is quick to grab cups for the two of them and gets strawberry yogurt, the dispenser laying down mesmerizing swirls of it. George chose blueberry, white chocolate, and mango—A combination Dream berated him for once they left the shop.

As they walked down the streets, which were quiet for the most part, George made his way through the frozen yogurt. Unconsciously, his eyes follow Dream, who was walking a few paces in front of him.

Locks of golden brown hair would rustle with each turn of his head. Breathy laughs at funny things he’d seen down the street swept past George’s ears. Bold bites of frozen yogurt made George cringe almost slightly. Every move was eye-catching, in almost the worst ways possible.

George wasn’t even so sure as to why he was so hyperaware.

He hadn’t been this sensitive to his movements in a few days, so why now?

Was it the fact that the competition was now technically over?

Was it the fact that he’d walled up his feelings behind his anxieties for the competition, and now they were bursting forth once again?

Did the competition really take him up *that* emotionally? Was he *that* subject to his worries?

A poke at his cheek makes George jump back.

“You okay?” Dream asks him, his brows are furrowed and his lips are pursed.

How could he have been so caught up emotionally to put a pause on feeling so strongly about the very person before him?

“I, uh,” George blinks, “Yeah, I’m fine.”

“Hm,” Dream hums doubtfully, “If you say so.”

“I’m fine don’t worry.”

Dream looks reluctant, but he drops the subject nonetheless.

They continue walking down the sidewalks, crossing lulled streets and passing quiet shops. As they go on, time trickles by and so do George’s thoughts. Eventually, they come across a beach, sparsely populated due to the chilly weather.

“C’mon,” Dream drags him down the cement stairs, and George tugs away.

“I don’t want to get my shoes sandy, Dream. We still have to go back to the competition eventually, and I don’t wanna be all gross.”

“Yeah good point, I wouldn’t wanna trek sand across the stage when we win either.”

George snorts at his remark.

“So,” Dream bends down and slips off his shoes and socks, “There. Problem solved.”

Even so, George doesn’t budge. “I’m way too lazy for that.”

A smile slips on Dream’s face. “I bet I could make it to the shoreline before you do.”

“Wh—Why you. . .,” George begins to take off his shoes, and Dream’s already taken off for the ocean.

Shouting after him, George throws off his socks hastily and barely holds them as he races after Dream. By the time he catches up, he’s panting, gasping for air.

“How did you—,” George puts his hands on his knees.

“Jesus, catch your breath old man,” laughs Dream.

“How did you get here so fast? And—,” George tries to even out his breathing, but instead falls to the sandy floor, “And you’re not even tired?”

“It’s more like *you’re* unathletic.”

“Shut up.”

“Hm, how about no?”

“Asshole.”

Dream smiles and offers him a hand. “That’s me.”

George takes it, but quickly pulls his hand back. The palm of his hand had burned at the contact. Once he stood up, Dream rolled up the hem of his pants and stepped into the lapping waves, waters pulling back and then pushing forth once again.

“Dream, it’s cold,” George warned.

Heeding no warnings, Dream got closer to the water until he stood straight in it. Almost immediately, he jumped back.

He hissed under his breath, scurrying back to the dry sand. “Shit that’s cold!”

“I told you, you idiot,” George laughed.

George walked past Dream, who was still reeling from the cold of the water. Eventually Dream came back to the dry line where George was, and the two idly wandered down the shoreline.

As they walked, George glanced over and back to Dream, who occasionally kicked away at the loose sand and whistled tuneless songs. Just past him was the slowly setting sun, now crossing the horizon at later and later hours as the air got warmer.

Watching him, George wanted to deny that he missed it. The ache in his chest. The warmth in his face. The longing he had to reach out to just hold his hand.

Had he really been that stupid? That blind as to get so caught up in his anxieties? To push away these raging emotions of his?

Well, it was himself he supposed, but nonetheless they were back for now.

Dream ran down to the waters again and took a tentative step into it. This time, however, he didn't rush out and wallowed in the cold waters a little longer.

"George look!" He shouted. "It's not that bad."

"Yeah, well, you're just a weirdo."

"You're just scared."

"Am not." George walked down to the patch where Dream was, yet still kept a safe distance from the lapping waves.

Dream set down his socks and his shoes on the dry sand, and he quickly ran back to the water.

"What're you do—Hey!"

His question was quickly answered as Dream kicked some water onto his legs.

"You motherfucker," George muttered as he rolled up the hem of his pants and dropped his shoes off to the side.

Without thought, George stepped into the water and was quickly taken aback by the freezing temperature. "God what the—It's freezing! How are you not cold?"

To answer, Dream shrugged and splashed some more water in his direction.

George quickly managed to forget the biting waters and kicked up water right after Dream. He rolled up his sleeves, and tentatively got closer to where Dream was standing. As George came nearer, Dream laughed as he backed up.

"Hey now, George. It was just a joke. We can't actually get wet," Dream gave a nervous chuckle as George waded closer and closer. "You don't wanna go to the award ceremony soaking in salt water, now do you?"

"Too late," George laughed, and splashed upwards with his hands.

Starting in a lagged run, the two broke out into a chase.

Yelling in ragged protests and laughing in wheezy breaths, Dream pulled himself through the waters as he apologized to George for dragging him into the ocean.

George could barely hear him as the water splashed around them, and he laughed all the same.

His eyes followed every movement at once: Pretty laughs echoing in his ears, strands of golden brown hair getting caught in droplets of salty water, green eyes in a messy, flushed crinkle of smiles, and joking laughs with George's name on his lips.

The very person in front of him was making these overbearing emotions within him.

George had missed this so much, hadn't he?

Drumming his fingers on his knees, Dream flitted his eyes around the room. He could recognize some faces from previous years, others not so much. Together, coaches and teammates alike sat in the university's auditorium. The stage before them all held trophies and medals for the events they'd worked so hard for.

To Dream's right, Ms. Davis sat talking brightly to another coach from a different school near them. She had no worries, and it was evident in the way she carried her school's name and theirs.

Watching people file in, Dream felt a pressure in his head build. Taking another look around the room, the number of people was astounding. There were too many people for his taste, and there were much too little awards for all the people that were there. The number of people in there was only growing, casting a larger shadow on their chances of winning by the minute.

Glancing over to his left, it didn't look like George was doing any better.

Knee bouncing and eyes flitting around all the same, George was as restless as he was.

A few minutes later, the lights dimmed once most people were seated. Voices hushed as a spotlight enshrouded the stage.

It was now or never, Dream supposed.

The competition hosts were putting on a recap of that year on the blank white backdrop—a small 5 minute documentary of sorts talking about the very competition they were partaking in.. Needless to say, it did nothing to calm George's nerves.

He could barely focus on the video, random students and teachers he didn't recognize flashing by in small clips. The narrators were nothing but a muffle in his ears.

Once it was done, the white backdrop was lifted to show more of the stage. From behind it, the man who was the competition director came to the podium—Mr. Leonard.

He wore the same maroon suit as he did in George's dream, all those nights ago. Deja Vu? George wondered, but the thought quickly left his mind as Mr. Leonard tapped at the microphone.

"Hello?" He said, before standing a little straighter. "Hello everyone!"

A greeting was echoed back from the crowd.

"Thank you so much for being here. Codeworld truly would not be as lively as it is without all of you. This year's turnout was better than other years, and I see many bright young people in the crowd this evening.

All of you did an amazing job, truly. But as it must come with any competition, there will always have to be a winner. So without further ado, let's get into the awards now shall we?"

An applause was made as the man shuffled around his papers, readying himself to announce the winners for the individual categories.

Taking a breath in, he began.

“Starting off with the Junior Individual division. For honorable mentions. . .”

One by one, students from the dimmed crowd stood and made their way up to the stage. Beat by beat, claps were made for each group. Cheers were made.

George could hear his heartbeat in his ears.

The bounce of his knee became more constant as time went on.

When it came to his and Dream’s division, George could feel his pulse burst out of his veins.

“Alright, thank you and congratulations,” Giving a slight cough, “Moving on to the Senior Group division.”

Dream glanced over at George, and he gave a futile thumbs up. George gave one back.

He heaved a heavy breath, and he stilled himself as Mr. Leonard began to announce the winners.

“In honorable mentions, we have Woods and Goodlaw from Lakeside Prep, Li and Yu from Jackson Highschool, and Sharp and Keenan from Lincoln Highschool.”

The three pairs walked their way up to the stage, obvious to be glad to have won anything at all.

Pictures were snapped and then they were kept on stage.

Dream gave a positive sigh and George echoed it back. Their first hurdle was cleared.

“Moving onto third place, we have Liu and Ames from Oakridge Academy.”

Another round of applause. The pair was recognizable; They had come in as honorable mentions the year before.

Pictures were snapped once again and placed next to the honorable mentions.

It was another place Dream and George avoided.

Being in first place was a goal, and George was determined to get there. It was obvious that Dream felt the same.

His heartbeat was thrumming in his ears, and his nerves buzzed under his skin. Fear and anticipation ate away at him as Mr. Leonard readied himself for the next announcement.

“In second place, we have Wardlaw and Herrings from Armstrong High School.”

An unrecognized pair. New on the playing field and already placing second. Even so, George couldn’t be bothered to care.

He and Dream weren’t in second place. They weren’t in third. They weren’t an honorable mention. All that was left was first place.

The last hurdle.

The end goal.

Clicking from the cameras flashed by and the pair stood next to those in third.

George couldn't help but put his hands to his face, resting his elbows on his knees. He exhaled in an attempt to even his breathing, but his nerves were everywhere—Spiking under his hands, boiling in his neck.

Terror and fear and hope all surged wordlessly inside his body.

The accumulation of his work all year. Did it really become worth it? Was it really going to show tonight?

A gentle squeeze on his shoulder brought him back. It was Dream, a reassuring anchor as George spiraled in those few seconds.

He was obviously worried. George could see it in his wobbly, unsure smile and restless eyes. Even so, he was there, trying to show George it was going to be fine.

In the dark of the auditorium, for those few seconds, George would admit he was grateful.

“Alright and the very last for tonight, first place in the senior group division.”

George couldn't bring himself to sit up straight. The lights were blinding. His heartbeat was deafening.

“Goes to. . .”

Another gentle squeeze on his shoulder.

It would be alright.

He had Dream by his side. What else could he need?

“Davidson and Williamson from Lakeside High School,” He announced.

Oh.

George feels a tug at his sleeve, and suddenly he's on the stage.

“I present to you, our Senior Group Division winners!”

The lights don't burn down like George thought they would. When he's on the stage, the trophy isn't heavy, but it's light. The applaud doesn't hurt to hear, instead it's a light muffle of noise.

Instead, Dream's laugh is clear in his ears. His smile shines brighter than the trophy in their hands. It's infectious.

George laughs, and his smile grows wide on his face. He doesn't think he's ever smiled so naturally as he did on that stage, laughing with a trophy next to someone who made him feel like the world.

“Let's give another round of applause for all of the winners this year!”

Together, they raised the large trophy between them for the camera—A three tiered wonder with a trophy cup at the top of it. George took a breath, and his surge of emotions finally burst forth,

flowing from him with each laugh. The air felt clear in his lungs. The auditorium was open and freeing.

Glancing at Dream, George felt time stop in its place.

He was glowing under the stage lights. His smile was worth more than a million dollars ever could be. His laugh was better than any symphony ever made.

With someone he'd so very wanted gone and out of his life at the beginning of the year, George had won first place in an event for Codeworld with Dream.

And he wouldn't have it any other way.

"God, I just knew it, I knew it, I knew it!"

Ms. Davis tackled the two of them in a hug in the hall outside the auditorium.

"Just look at you two!" She exclaimed, resting her hands on their shoulders. "Winning first place in Codeworld."

The two of them felt bashful, almost. Her affection was overbearing in the best way possible.

"I'm just," she sighed as she gave an admiring glance at the two of them, "So proud of you two."

Before either of them could say anything, she quickly pulled out her phone. "I have to take a picture of you two! I doubt that the cameraman is going to give me a photo early on."

The two of them were quickly squeezed together, the trophy held between them. After a quick click, she asked a stranger nearby to take a picture of the three of them together. Happy to oblige, the three of them stood together and smiled.

As they left the center, they were congratulated, by past competitors and strangers alike. By the time they truly left, it was nearing six, and they were starving.

"I'll go ahead and head back. You two be safe alright?"

"Yes Ms. Davis."

Giving them one last hug, she went into her car. "Again, I'm so proud of you two. We'll talk more about it on Monday, alright?"

They nodded, and she gave them a wave as she drove away. Together, they watched as she left, a feeling of pride and giddiness within them.

Dream turned to George, shrugging with a smile, "Well, I don't know about you, but I'm starving."

George could only nod in agreement, feeling as if he'd taken his first relaxed breath in eons. "Absolutely famished."

“Hey, are you done writing that thing for me yet?”

Dream coughs for a second. “What?”

They’re at a Five Guys, sitting at one of the tables. Dream was inhaling his food by the second, and George was too, tired out and running on frozen yogurt from earlier.

“That thing? Y’know.”

Dream digs for a fry. “I—what—Oh. That thing.” He feels heat flush to his face as soon as the realization hits him.

“Yeah. No rush or anything, I just,” George shrugged, “Wanted to know.”

“I’m, uh, I am done. Actually.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“Is it any good?”

Dream gives a scoff, and it’s a nervous one at that. “I think.”

“You think?”

“You’d have to read it for yourself.”

“What—Oh come on.”

“Mhm,” Dream hums and takes a bite out of his burger, “You just have to.”

“I’ll take your word for it.”

Dream mumbles. “Depends if you end up taking it or not.”

“What?” George asked. “I didn’t hear what you said.”

“Nothing.”

“What?”

“It’s nothing.”

George hums doubtfully. “Uh-huh.”

“I promise it was nothing. Now hurry up and eat, we have school tomorrow.”

George sighs, but picks up the pace anyways. “Like you go to sleep at a reasonable hour.”

“True, but what would your mother think, huh, George?”

“Shut up,” is all George mumbles.

Eventually, they get on the road and head back. Probably tired from the competition and the food, George managed to fall asleep within 10 minutes.

Dream, however, could only think of the nerve wracking day that he'd just had—Recklessly bold moves he'd made. Little words he'd said. Questionable glances he'd given.

Above all else, he'd won Codeworld with George.

With George, was the most surprising part.

Even so, after winning, something more so occupied his mind.

He glanced over at George, peacefully asleep and unaware of the cramp he was probably going to awake to. It was a serene sight, and it truly was no different from the first time he'd seen him asleep that night on Homecoming.

He thought of his note. The writing he'd made in pencil.

The paper made for no other than the person asleep next to him:

A peacefully sleeping dolt, who'd done something to Dream that only his writing could lay out.

Arriving at George's house, it wasn't too dark. Not yet at least.

George had woken up once they'd entered the city, stretching like a cat across the seat. He'd gotten up and out of the car, rather energetically, and grabbed his things from the trunk of Dream's car.

"Thanks for the ride," George said, crouched by the rolled down window.

"No problem," Dream looked up at him.

George stood for a few seconds, and his mouth opened and closed as if he wanted to say something. Dream didn't dare to interrupt him, waiting for whatever was on the tip of his tongue.

Eventually, however, he simply nodded tensely. "Alright then. See you tomorrow."

"Yeah," Dream couldn't find any words either.

As George walked up to his porch, Dream felt something tug at him.

"Wait."

George turned back quickly, almost surprising Dream. "What?" His voice was a little soft.

"Would you wanna, I dunno, go out for frozen yogurt or something?" Dream tried to shrug off the implications it gave. "As a celebration or something."

The silence was deafening.

"I—yes I would," George said as if he was accepting an invitation to a formal event. "I mean, yeah why not."

“Cool.”

“Let me just,” George lugged his suitcase to the door, “Get my stuff inside and grab another jacket.”

“Yeah, yeah, of course.” It comes out a little faster than Dream would like to admit.

“Give me a second, alright?”

“Yeah,” Dream mumbled as George went inside, with his mother to greet him at the door.

And so Dream waited, as his feelings boiled on his tongue and emotions swelled in his chest.

“Oh wow, the nostalgia.”

“Yeah, yeah I know.”

They’re parked at the park. The very one they came to together that one fateful night on Homecoming.

“It feels like just yesterday we were here. Bickering and all that.”

Just before, they’d made a stop at Dream’s house to drop off his suitcase and to pick up something in particular. Then they had gotten frozen yogurt and driven here.

“Yeah,” Dream helps himself on top of the car and offers a hand to George. “It really does.”

He doesn’t even know why he came here. Something romantic? Something in his gut? Something instinctual?

Whatever it was, they were there now.

Sat on the cold roof, they ate frozen yogurt for the second time that day. As they ate, it was quiet. George doesn’t make a cold bite once.

“Thank you.”

It startles Dream, and his heart jumps out of his throat for a second. “What?”

“For everything,” George’s voice is quiet. “Thank you.”

It’s genuine. And it’s so, so gentle. Dream wants to hear it again, but he doesn’t want to push his luck.

“Oh.”

It’s all he can manage as he stared at George.

He’s pretty. It’s a thought Dream can’t help but think again.

Porcelain skin in the moonlight. Midnight brown hair glowing under the stars. Soft brown eyes

staring into the frozen yogurt.

His heart aches so much. So, so much.

When he stills, the feeling of paper crinkling in his back pocket reminds him of what he has:

His emotions written in delicate writing.

All for the person next to him.

Chapter End Notes

alright oh my god when i tell you this chapter??? was so scary to write???

something i want to say: i felt as if i needed to address the lack of george centered emotions in the past 2 chapters, and so i hope i did so well enough? or at least to a point to where it made sense.

but god a lot happened this chapter, and i really hope that it amounts to everything i've written so far, especially the upcoming chapter

i hope you guys liked this chapter and thank you for reading :)

any comments, criticisms, or questions are all welcomed <3

tw: [@alofffie](#)

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Exchanging the letter, and what follows.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Still staring, Dream scrambles out of his trance.

“I—Yeah, yeah of course. No problem.”

God, “no problem.” Dream had the overbearing will to shoot himself in the foot right there and then.

George looks at him, but pays the stumble no mind. Even so, it’s obvious that his thank you was a one time event, exclusive to only those few seconds earlier.

“Thank you. By the way. You helped me out just as much as I helped you,” Dream spits out. “So thanks.”

“No problem,” George echoes with a teasing smile.

Scoffing, Dream turns back to his yogurt, hoping the sweet would distract him, melting gently on his tongue. Even so, the bare taste only amplifies his feelings.

In the cold, the two sat in silence. The air, to Dream, felt thick and unmovable. The paper in his back pocket just wouldn’t be quiet.

Eventually, George set his frozen yogurt cup down, surprisingly empty, and pulled his knees to his chest. Dream doesn’t move a muscle.

It’s a few seconds before George asks, “Want to hear about the stars?”

Dream doesn’t hesitate. “Yes.”

And so he does. They both look upwards, the sky welcoming under their gaze. The stars were just coming out, peeking from their pockets of the night.

Pointing, George finds constellations and recounts memories, and Dream sits and watches. It’s all he can, and wants, to do.

George points to Orion’s belt, three dim stars in a clear line. He tells him the story of when his dad first brought him stargazing. George’s already told Dream once, but Dream listens anyways.

George points again, towards a name Dream can’t remember. And he points again. And again. And again

Slowly, Dream’s cup becomes emptier and emptier, and it seems as if the stars amounted to more and more.

Dream watches as the tips of his fingers point towards the sky, and he nods as if he could see where George was looking, listening to his every word as if it were gospel. He drank in his voice, sweet in the way it flowed out.

Not once does George pause, jumping to and fro on the specks that littered the sky.

As he does, Dream's mind wanders with him, thoughts moving like George's flitting eyes.

If Dream was being honest, he'd never cared too much about what was above.

Within the stars, Dream felt as if constellations were arbitrary patterns strewn together in the canvas of space. And, like people, stars looked the same to a passing eye, with some shining brighter and some being dimmer. They all merged together in the sky, and they all become nameless to him.

Watching as George's lips moved, crimson brushstrokes against soft skin, Dream swallowed down the heat in his chest.

But now, however, Dream thinks he likes the stars. And of all the stars, George shines the brightest. He's the only one Dream can look at and remember.

George was the one Dream wouldn't forget. The one he'd find again, and again, and again.

There was no doubt in his mind about it.

Eventually, George slows. His voice becomes softer and softer, but he doesn't seem tired. Hesitant to be loud, almost. Tentative of the quiet.

"You alright?"

George smiles, "Yeah I'm good. I'm just. . . a little light headed or something."

Pausing, Dream waits before he speaks. "How come?"

"Maybe I've been talking too much," He looks away, "You've been just a little quiet. Wasn't really sure if you were listening is all."

"I was, don't worry."

Their voices are low, as if exchanging a secret Dream didn't know of.

"I know you were. I've probably been talking too much."

"If you say so," Dream pauses. "I could talk about something, so you can catch your breath, or something."

George nods, and Dream leans back, not really sure as to what to talk about.

Taking a slight huff, "So, we won Codeworld, huh?"

"Yeah. I still can't believe it."

"Crazy, right?"

"Mm, well you *did* say it was us," George elbowed him teasingly. "Of course *we'd* win Codeworld."

“George on Friday night sure as hell wasn’t saying that.”

“Shut up. It was the, uh,” said George, “Pre-competition nerves.”

“Mhm.”

“But we won after all,” George looked up at him. “So I guess my nerves didn’t matter too much after all, did they?”

Dream felt his heart get stuck in his throat when his eyes landed on him. His voice cracked and died. “No, I guess they really didn’t.”

There’s a pause.

George shuffled, letting his legs rest out and putting his weight backwards onto his hands. “Oh yeah.”

“‘Oh yeah.’ What?”

“Your writing. You said you finished it.”

Dream’s heart stopped. He swore it did.

“Yes, yeah. I did.”

“When can I see it? Or read it, I suppose.”

“Well. . .”

His heart’s reached his ears, and it’s pounding on his eardrums. He feels his chest shake with each bang.

“What?” George laughs, Dream’s nervousness probably evident on his face.

“I—Well you see,” Dream reaches into his pocket.

“Yeah?”

The note practically stings to the touch on his fingertips, and he wants to throw it away—Burn it. Spare himself the humiliation.

George gasps and smiles, “Is that it?”

But he told himself he’d give it, didn’t he? Eventually.

Today was that day, he supposed.

It felt as if a million years had passed by the time he finally put out words. “Yeah, it is.”

“Dream, why are you so nervous?” George’s smile grows wider.

It was going to happen eventually, and so here they were.

Heart in his hands, Dream took a breath in. He can’t stop the bare tremor within his voice. “It has something important on it.”

The note almost sticks to his fingers, and he doesn’t want to let go of it.

“Like what?”

His mind buffers the moment he needs it, and he struggles to find words, losing all comprehension at that exact moment and devolving by centuries.

“It’s something about me.”

“Oh?”

“And something about you.”

“Ooh.”

“So, here. I just,” his words get caught in his throat, “Want you to know this.”

“Okay,” says George, raising his eyebrows, “Nothing like you’ve murdered a man, right?”

Laughing nervously, his nerves do nothing but bounce around more. “No, no, nothing like that.”

“Alright then. I wouldn’t want to be a part of your alibi or something,” He chuckled. “Being partners in Codeworld isn’t exactly the same as being partners in crime, now is it?”

George’s smile squeezes and squeezes at Dream’s heart, and he feels as if he’s about to burst. So much was going on. Too much was happening.

“Yeah,” he says, voice barely audible.

Holding his hand out, George waited for the letter, unaware of what was held inside of it.

Nerves aflame and breath heavy, Dream handed it over tentatively, the emotions he’d held so dearly now vulnerable to the very person who’d caused them.

George was nervous, to say the least.

As George rambled on about the stars, Dream had kept his eyes on him. His gaze made him tense, piercing eyes watching his every move. It made him stumble on his words more than once, and he was far too prone to the heat that rose up his face.

Later, Dream had talked about the letter as if it were a sort of bomb, waiting to explode within the tiny folds of paper.

Both excited and slightly worried, George took the paper.

It was ordinary—Plain, simple, notebook paper folded twice into a rectangle. Barely creased, it was light and delicate, almost.

Inside it was Dream’s writing, something George had pestered him for more than once on a few too many occasions. Now, he’d finally get to read it, and it wasn’t enough to say that George was ecstatic to read what was inside. Even so, it held something important to Dream from what George could tell, much more than he’d first considered.

And so, he'd treat it as such.

They were friends after all. Friends care about what others hold dear, right?

And so, George opened the paper gingerly, took a breath, calmed his nerves, and began to read.

I remember when I first saw you.

The ventilation system had broken down; it was probably a-hundred degrees inside. The fan the school provided for us was ancient and rusty, barely producing a breeze as it clanked around. My eyes had glossed over by the time we got to bimodal distributions.

Then you, large eyed and exhausted, barged into class almost forty minutes late.

You had that funny British accent and a sweater that looked like it was five inches thick. You looked like you were melting to death in our classroom.

Even so, you went up to the teacher, said your apologies, and sat down.

I think you made an impression on everyone there.

Codeworld was even more a surprise.

You came in, without a care in the world, and declared the projects we were going to do as if I wasn't there. I can still remember my jaw barely hanging open as you bluntly spouted out plans right in my face. Each statement was a punch in the gut, and, when you finally turned to look at me, you glanced past me as if I were nothing more than vermin.

I think it was then that I decided I hated you.

But, it's different now.

I'm not sure when the transition came to, but, in the back of my mind, I think it all leads back to Homecoming.

That night was something I'll never forget.

I remember being so annoyed, frayed to my wits end that you were there. But by the end of it, I felt nice after talking to you.

You, so stubborn and blunt, left me feeling calm.

How? How did you do that?

Every time we met after that, something inside of me grew. It burned me from the inside, pulling and twisting at my emotions.

Whenever I spoke to you, it was with hesitations and worries—and it still is. I feel myself trip on my anxieties, my words coming out in bits and pieces. Sentences fall to the floor in fragments and never in full.

Even so, I feel giddy at the idea of getting to speak to you. I feel excitement rise in my chest at the idea of getting to simply see you.

I'm not sure when I acknowledged this feeling, but when I learned what it was, it was almost calming. It's not like in books and stories when the realization comes crashing down like a forty-foot tall ocean wave, but, instead, it was more like a warm light, peacefully washing over me.

Since then, I've come to learn so much about you and myself.

You can be so stubborn sometimes and so stupidly dense. You can be rude and blunt without thinking twice. You get in over your head with so many things, but you'll worry so much about everything. Even so, I'm okay with that. There's so much to you, and I want to learn all of it.

The jokes we make and the games we play stay in my mind, ever so present during my every waking hour. Not a single second goes by where I regret being with you.

My nerves sing at your touch, bounding octaves higher and higher. My heart falls and rises at your words, vessels growing taut at each syllable.

You look at me like I'm your world, and you're mine.

You've come into my life with paint on your hands, streaking saturated colors across my every thought. You've dirtied the floors, covering my mind in your reckless movements. Your handprints, footprints, and fogged drawings on the windows of my mind are all permanent, indented with no hope of removal.

It's a masterpiece I can't help but marvel at, screaming in its image with the very being of you.

Every soft touch, glance, and smile—they all linger in my mind and leave me awake wondering about how you'd feel, if you even feel this way at all.

Do you lie, unsleeping, in the dead of the night, wondering about what could be? Wishing that I were there just to be with you? To see you? To hear you?

All that you do pushes me further towards my dizzying emotions.

With every laugh you give, I feel myself fall a little harder for you.

For every smile you crack, my heart aches a little more.

By the time you give everything, I'll be reduced to nothing.

I've gotten to the floor, and I'm heaving with bated breaths at your every move.

You do so much to me in your oblivious, headstrong ways.

If you don't know what I'm trying to say by now, I'll put it out loud and clear.

I like you George.

Oh.

I like you George.

Oh .

I like you George. I like you George. I like you George.

The words echoed in his head. They wallowed in his eyes, and he reread the line over and over and over again.

I like you George.

All at once, a heat rushed forth, filling every vein of blood within him. His nerves tingled, a newfound sense of confusion and happiness within him. Floods of emotions swayed and shoved at him, George now powerless against their relentless force.

It was. . . mutual.

Mutual. Their feelings. Mutual.

His heart was racing, pumping and pushing against his rib cage .

Nerves twitched at his fingertips as he lightly gripped the paper.

A masterpiece. Dizzying emotions. Soft glances.

The words yelled and shouted at him the emotions so clearly stated at the bottom in his rough writing:

I like you George.

Even so, a trace of doubt plagued at his tongue, and so he spoke in a spur of adrenaline:

“Say it.”

Dream coughed. “What?”

“Say it. Say that you. . .,” George trailed off as his senses struck him, the words tied down to the pits of his gut.

“You—Why?” Dream sputtered.

“Because I want to hear it. From you.”

“I wrote it!”

“Yeah, well I want to hear it from *you* ! Right now!” George said decisively.

“For god’s sake,” Dream cradled his face, and George was absolutely certain of the red in his cheeks, “It’s in the fine print. Read it again.” His words were muffled as he looked away.

“I did! But, I still want to hear it from you. I’ll. . . I’ll,” George barely quieted, “only believe it if I hear it from you.”

It took a few seconds before Dream finally looked at him, eyes peeking out from between fingertips. Taking a breath, Dream slowly sat up and faced him. It seemed like an eternity when he

finally opened his mouth.

Pursing his lips, he exhaled, “I’ll only do it if you promise to give me a response.”

George paused.

A response. Could he even give a response?

He liked Dream. He knew he did.

George enjoyed spending time with him far too much than he’d like to admit. He enjoyed listening to him laugh. He enjoyed listening to him ramble about code. He enjoyed just being with him.

So, why did it seem so hard to say it?

“It doesn’t have to be a yes or anything. I just want a response,” Dream said.

“I . . .”

He’d say it later, but, right now more than anything, he needed to hear Dream say it directly, out loud. The need tugged at him, down and down and down.

Swallowing, George nodded. “Okay.”

“Alright, okay,” Dream exhaled slowly.

Waiting, George felt as if he was holding his breath.

A few pauses later, Dream rushed out, exasperated, “Stop staring at me.”

“I can’t help it.”

“Then, I don’t know, help it!” Dream pursed his lips again. “It’s hard saying it.”

“You wrote it.”

“No shit, Sherlock. It’s easier in writing than it is saying it. Especially since—,” he glanced away, “—since that person is in front of me.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, ‘Oh’.”

“I’ll try not to stare.”

“And I’ll try to say it.”

“It’s okay. I’ll wait,” George said. “You know I will.”

Dream sighed, “And that’s the worst part.”

George just laughed, furrowing his brows, and he forced his eyes down to the cool metal of the car.

Exhaling and inhaling, Dream locked eyes with George. “Okay.”

George’s heart skipped. His eyes were a truly beautiful shade of muted green.

“I thought you said no staring.”

“I changed my mind.”

Swallowing, George stilled. His hands were restless as he tried to keep still, not daring to make a move.

“Okay, George.”

A beat.

“I . . . like you.”

He’d said it. He’d actually said it.

Dream was on edge, far too on edge. It had felt like eons in the time George read the note, and when he was done he’d had a blank look on his face. Reading him was hard sometimes, and this was no exception.

Now, George had forced words from his lips that Dream had interlaced himself with. They were a part of his every thought, and now he was laying them out, vulnerable and delicate.

When they left his lips, he forced himself to look at George. Dream would admit he was scared. Maybe he watched him because it was as if George would run away. To where, Dream hadn’t the slightest clue, but he’d be running away no less.

George was a sensitive, headstrong person that would react to his words. An unpredictable enigma that Dream just so happened to fall for.

And so he stared and waited, in fear of whatever would happen.

Even so, the silence seemed to stretch taut, and it was ripping by the second. It would snap, and then would ensue chaos. Both he and George were tugging by both ends, and it was reaching its limit.

God, what if George really didn’t like him? Dream would have to drive him home and not face him once. He’d have to see him every day with a guilt eating away at his stomach. He’d lose his partner for Codeworld, but, more importantly, he’d lose a friend he so cared for.

It wasn’t too late to turn back—undo what’s been done.

However, before Dream could take back his words, George sputtered out:

“Again.”

“What?”

“Say it. Again.”

It was a stab in his gut. Was George trying to kill him?

“Why?” Dream nearly shouted. The heat in his face was dizzying, his nerves buzzing in his cheeks.

“I just have to hear it. Again.”

Dream pursed his lips. George fished the words out, and now he was putting them back, only to pull them out once more.

“Please.”

Biting at the inside of his cheek, Dream clenched his eyes together and exhaled in a struggle.

The second time is easier, right?

“I like you.”

“Again.”

Another breath. “I like you.”

“Again.”

His voice stuttered. “I like you.”

“One more time.”

“God, I like you George!” Frustration and anxiety starting to boil over, “Please, just understand I do!”

There was finally silence, a lull in the rushing conversation that was going 100 miles an hour.

Dream waited, and waited, the clock ticking at a snails pace. The build of anxiety began to stack against his favor. His nerves prodded at him from underneath his fingertips as he gripped the fabric of his sleeves.

George inhaled—sharp and sudden.

Dream didn’t move a muscle.

And finally, in a quiet voice that one wouldn’t have ever heard, George said:

“I like you too.”

“You. . .”

Dream was mentally screaming into the abyss, and even more so now.

He blinked a few times as if it was going to clear his vision. A heat blossomed within his chest, and his nerves were exploding like fireworks.

He couldn’t think. He couldn’t feel. He couldn’t breathe.

Rushing forward he put his hand to George’s cheek and asked breathlessly, “Can I kiss you?”

Stuttering, George’s face was warm to the touch. “What?”

“Can I?”

It seemed like decades had passed when George finally locked eyes with him and nodded.

“I haven’t ever. . .”

He stilled in his stupidity.

“Me neither.”

But that’s ok he supposed.

Dream’s voice dies into a whisper. “So I’ll be taking your first kiss—“

He stutters at the word like an elementary student. George breaks into a giggle, and his skin moves softly underneath his fingertips. “And I’ll be taking yours.”

A smile came to Dream’s face, and he looked into his eyes, beautiful and shining underneath the moonlight.

Adrenaline coursed through his veins, reckless abandon taking over him in that moment.

So, Dream leaned forward, strands of hair at his fingertips.

And he kissed him.

When their lips met, it was soft and sweet.

Inexperienced and slow, George was still and unmoving underneath Dream’s hand, but pushed back all the same. Like muting a sound, the press silenced the deafening hammering from within George’s chest.

He squeezed his eyes shut, only becoming more sensitive to each move.

Dream kissed gently, slowly—understanding in his press and so caring in his touch. It screamed of Dream, pushing yet pensive in his movements.

George melted under his lips.

It wasn’t perfect, but George wouldn’t have asked for anything else. They were everything he had ever wanted.

George never believed that fate was real, but, at that very moment, he’d let himself think it was.

When Dream pulled away, George opened his eyes. Dream’s were lidded, lashes caught on the moonlight. His cheeks were red, and there was no doubt George’s were too.

Dream’s hand stayed on his cheek. His eyes swept over George’s face, and he flushed under his gaze.

“You’re so beautiful.”

It’s sudden, and George can’t help but be startled.

“You,” asked George. “Really think that?”

“I do. Of course I do.”

He says it so certainly. He says it as if it were fact. George’s heart aches and aches.

His eyes landed on Dream’s lips—a mesmerizing draw.

“Could I. . .,” George dared to ask.

“Please.”

And so again, they came together, lips pressing against each other.

Making the conscious effort to turn his head a slight bit, George exhaled, feeling as if he’d been holding his breath for far too long.

Leaning into Dream’s touch, George reached his hand up to Dream’s.

Knuckles calloused yet skin smooth, George latched onto it as he kissed him. He reached around for Dream’s other hand, and rested in it. Slotting their hands together, they fit perfectly, like puzzle pieces clicking together at long last.

His heart sang as they sat there for an eternity, a melody playing that he’d never forget. They kissed, again, and again, and again. It becomes a feverish feeling that George has burned into his memory.

The person he’d longed for for so, so, long, was kissing him. He was so ardent and kind, yet wanting and sudden. His hand was cupping his face, thumb brushing his cheekbones under calloused skin.

George doesn’t think he’ll ever get tired of it.

He doesn’t think he’s ever been this happy.

He feels Dream smile underneath his lips, and so George does too. They giggle in their childish manners and Dream pushes against him harder, pressing against George’s stretched grin.

Dream pulls back to look at him. He’s smiling so widely, and his eyes are so lost in the crinkle of his eyes.

George loves it.

He presses a tentative kiss into Dream’s cheekbone, directly on a freckle that was among so many others. When he sits back, Dream doesn’t move, so he does it again. He presses his lips against his cheek, and his nose, and his forehead.

Dream giggles under the peppers of kisses, and he tilts George up to look him in the face.

“God, I’m so glad. I’m so, so happy right now,” he says, gently brushing his cheek.

“I am too,” George smiles back.

George kisses him again, and their eyes close.

Their hands stay together, warm and loving.

Their lips meet in joyous laughter.

Above them, the stars watch them, shining with their glow.

Chapter End Notes

:)

i truly hope this chapter amounts to everything ive written so far. thank you so much for reading this chapter and all of the support! one more chapter to go :]

feel free to leave questions, comments, or criticisms! each and every one of them makes my day :>

tw: [@alofffie](#)

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

An epilogue.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Everything was the same the next day.

The sky was clear and covered in a bright blue, saturated and glowing. The students milling about were talking about their weekends and whatnot. The cars driving by took their commutes to wherever they were headed.

It felt so normal. It felt as if nothing had changed.

Yet, George felt so, so different.

Absentmindedly, he gripped his backpack strap as his heart unfurled the feelings he'd felt. He could hardly believe that it was *last night* that he'd sat with Dream, on his car, in the park, under the stars.

Softly, George felt the ghost of his hand on his cheek as he walked down the halls to class—a phantom touch that made his face flush.

The echo of a goodbye as Dream dropped him off sounded clearly in his ears.

“Thank you.” George felt his voice get caught halfway. He was glued to his seat.

“For what?”

They were in Dream's car, right outside of George's house. He had yet to get out.

“That.”

“You'll have to specify.” It was teasing in the way he'd said it, but George didn't miss the crack in his voice.

“I kissed you once and you get all cocky about it,” said George, furrowing his eyebrows.

“Well if I remember correctly,” Dream coughed into his hand, cheeks definitely flushing, “You kissed me five times.”

George let a laugh slip out. “You counted?”

“I don't know. Maybe I did.”

“You're insufferable.”

“And yet,” Dream leaned over the center console, planting a gentle kiss on his lips, “You still like

me anyways.”

George sat there, too afraid to lean forward yet not wanting to ever pull back.

“Oh, shut the hell up,” was all George could bear to mutter, face close to Dream’s as his face changed hues.

A smile stretched across Dream’s face, all teeth as a golden laugh echoed out. George pressed his lips into Dream’s cheeks, still hesitating and stifled in his movements. Even so, George couldn’t help the giggles that came out as he peppered kisses into Dream’s face.

Finally pulling back, George gestured over to his house. “I, uh, I have to go. My mum’s probably seen your car and is wondering why I haven’t gotten out just yet.”

Opening the car door, Dream barely tugged on his sleeve.

“What?”

“Oh come on,” Dream pouted.

George glanced around, not sure as to what he wanted. “What?”

“You should give me, like, a goodbye kiss.”

George could only sputter out a tangle of words. “A what?” He forced out.

“Just one.”

There’s a look on his face, and George gives into the tug at his heart.

Leaning down, he could only mumble, “You’re so clingy.”

He pressed a tentative kiss into Dream’s lips. He can feel the grin underneath his skin. “There. Happy?”

“Very,” There’s a smug look on his face.

George could only roll his eyes as he got out of the car, feeling all too stuffy and hot at the same time. “I hate you, so much.”

“You keep telling yourself that.”

George looked back to glare at him, but lost the bite as soon as he did.

Looking at him, Dream had a smile on his face, playful and stupid and fond. It made George stop dead in his tracks, stuck staring at Dream as he shifted out of the car.

“Thanks,” George instead pursed his lips in an attempt to form words, “For the ride that is.”

“Yeah, of course, no problem. See you tomorrow?”

A joyful tug in his heart pulled at the corners of his lips. “Of course.”

“Bye Georgie,” Dream singsonged after him.

Scoffing in half laughter, George got up and out, “Bye Dream.”

“See you tomorrow.”

“Yeah,” George mumbled. Shutting the door, he waved Dream off, a smile drawn on his lips.

Standing on his front lawn, George felt like the luckiest person on the whole planet.

Passing recognizable faces and repeated hallways, George’s life felt both different and the same. It was as if new lenses were slipped on, or a new feeling were lodged into the hard-drive of emotions he’d always harbored.

It was a small change that affected both everything and nothing.

Rounding the corner, he saw Dream and Sapnap at their lockers. Almost as if on instinct, Dream turned the moment George arrived and gave him a wave, a gentle smile coming with it.

Walking by, George’s heart skipped under his skin, and he waved back, slightly lagged.

Interlaced with buzzing nerves and a simple wave fueling his day, George stepped into his first class with an ache in his heart and a smile slipped on his face.

“How are my winners doing?” Ms. Davis exclaimed, greeting the two of them right at the door.

They couldn’t help but smile as she gave a wide, homey grin at both of them. Hugging them both, she pulled them in tightly, and they accepted it with open arms.

Pulling back, she took a square look at both of them. “God, I am just so proud of you two.”

She sighed, like a sort of parent, in a proud air. “I knew you two could do it. And it was all your hard work combined together! Could you imagine this happening last year?” She laughed out, “I sure didn’t.”

“Trust me, we didn’t either,” Dream chuckled with her, a happy warmth blooming in his chest.

He glanced over at George, who kept his head held low. Either way, he could see the red brushing the tips of his ears.

Ms. Davis singing their praises really was doing something.

“Well either way,” Ms. Davis gave another prideful sigh, “I’m so happy the way things turned out as they did.”

She pulled them into another hug, smelling of a faded jade and lavender. It was warm, and Dream let himself exhale into her arms. They stood there for a few more seconds, windows letting in a warm light after them.

Eventually, Ms. Davis pulled back and gave a playful sigh, walking over to her chair.

“So, by the way that George is staying quiet,” she shuffled papers around from her desk, “I’m sure you two want something else from me.”

George glanced up sheepishly, “Was it really that obvious?”

“Being your coach for a couple of years makes it obvious,” she shook her head playfully, and held up an orange file.

The two of them looked at the folder with almost sparkling eyes, George lighting up almost instantly.

“You two can never catch a break can you?” sighed Ms. Davis. She set down the paper in front of them. “Alright, who wants to look at the judges’ notes first?”

Almost diving for the papers, the three of them spent the afternoon reviewing critiques on their project from before, the sun filtering in and disappearing by the time they said their goodbyes.

Slipping into bed, George felt a drowsiness pull at him from the back of his mind.

Homework he’d dreaded and assignments that he’d hated were all finished, tucked away neatly in his backpack. Shuffling under the covers, he glanced over at his bedside drawer, where the note Dream had written for him was tucked away with care. He smiled a little, knowing what was in there.

Dragging the covers over his shoulders, he pulled out his phone. A small notification alerted him, and he tapped on the screen gently.

11:54 P.M.

Dream: Hey

George: hey

Dream: What are u doing up so late?

George: i could ask u the same thing

Dream: Hw

11:55 P.M.

Dream: U?

George: same

George: i just finished up the assignments ms.arbrough gave us

Dream: U up to get on call?

George: yeah ofc

Not even a few seconds later, a small tone rang out and George answered.

“Hey.”

Dream’s voice was soft and a little raspy.

George curled himself further into his blankets. “Hey.”

“So. . .”

Sighing out, George smiled a little. “So. . .”

“How was your day?”

“Hm,” pausing as he thought, “A little boring. It was normal, I guess. You?”

“Same here. Took an AP Euro test.”

“How do you think you did on it?”

“Maybe got a 95, an 88 at worst.”

George gave a small laugh.

“Oh—” His voice perked up a slight bit.

“What?” George asked curiously.

“I had a question.”

“About what?”

“About us.”

He reeled his head for possible answers, but nothing came to mind. “What about us?”

“What. . .,” A small pause. “What are we?”

Silence followed, crackles of static and white noise following from George’s speaker.

“You mean. . .”

“Are we—I don’t know—dating?”

George was too tired to cough, yet his eyes widened.

Dream continued. “Sapnap was just—he was asking me about it this morning. I didn’t really know so I thought I’d ask you.”

What were they?

Were they dating?

How does this work, exactly?

A seed of dread was planted, and it began to grow within him. No more than a mere sprout, George could feel worry start from it. Finding out and digging for his feelings was a challenge in and of itself. But what happened next? Uneasiness and doubt spiraled, quickly growing larger and more consuming.

Too new and too fresh to this feeling, George simply rolled onto his back. “I don’t know,” was all he sighed out.

There was light shuffling on Dream's end. By the end of it, George could *hear* Dream's thoughts, swirling like George's all the same.

Together, they sat in silence, George's plastic stars glowing in a dull light on his ceiling.

"You—"

Dream didn't continue, so George filled in.

"What?"

Small cricket chirps sounded from outside in the humid night.

"Would you want to—"

Slowly, George asked, "Want to what?"

He waited and waited, and Dream laughed in a light chuckle. "C'mon George, I'm doing all the talking. You know what I'm trying to say."

Moonlight filtered in through George's blinds, landing on the foot of his bed.

"Do I?" George wondered.

"You do."

"Where did all of that cockiness from the other night go?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The, 'Oh come on George, give me a goodnight kiss will you?'" George pitched his voice an octave high, giving a terrible American accent.

"Oh," groaned Dream, cringing slightly. "Yeah that wasn't—Forget that."

"I don't think I will."

"It was so stupid."

"A little, maybe," George giggled, turning back onto his side to face his phone. Gently, he curled his hands up to his pillow and yawned.

The buzz of the air conditioner filled the space they spoke in, gentle whispers of air in place of voices. A small hum pricked George's ears up just as his eyes began to close.

"What?"

"Do you want to?"

George blinked out of his haze, feeling his words slur in his sleepiness. "Want to what?"

"Go out with me."

Dream's voice had fallen to a bare whisper—a miracle that the phone picked it up at all.

Propping himself up, "Yeah."

“Wh—,” The response was sudden, “Really?”

George felt a smile grow on his face. “Yes, really. Unless, you don’t want t-”

“Yeah I do!” Dream coughed and drew back in his volume. “I mean yeah, definitely, of course, yeah.”

Pursing his lips, George burst out in laughter. Dream followed after, his laugh ringing through the call. Slowly, their voices died out, crickets and the AC filling the space once more.

“So we’re dating.” The word felt strange coming out of his mouth, but he doesn’t hate it. It’s just a little bold is all.

“Officially, we’re together.”

“Together,” George echoed back. He felt the roots of doubt leave from his chest, a warm feeling spreading within his chest in its place instead.

“Together.”

George felt a funny, wobbly smile draw on his face. He giggled a little at the feeling, light headed joy filling his mind.

“Well, I’m tired, and I absolutely cannot fall asleep during my chem test tomorrow,” George said, “See you tomorrow?”

“Yeah of course.”

“Goodnight Dream.” A feeling within him wanted him to say more.

“Goodnight Georgie.”

They hang up, the call beeping and fading away from the screen.

Just before George could put his phone away for the night, a text message stopped him.

12:27 A.M.

Dream: Goodnight George :)

His heart flipped at the message, and he quickly typed back.

12:27 A.M.

George: goodnight dream :)

Shutting off his phone, he curled back into his blankets.

Burning in warmth, his shoulders curled into him and he held his hands right next to his head. Shutting his eyes gently, a fond smile spread on his face, cheeks aching in the slightest at his joy.

Shining down gently, the moonlight filtered in as George fell asleep, a loving ache in his heart as he drifted off.

Rapping his knuckles gently on the door, Dream called out, "Hello?"

"Come in," Ms. Davis called.

Walking in with flowers in his hands, he carefully made his way through, hoping not to lose any petals to brushing against the doorframe.

"Oh?" Ms. Davis rounded her desk, raising her eyebrows questioningly. "Now who are those for?"

Taking a small breath in, Dream held the flowers out. "These are for you, from George and I. We wanted to thank you for everything you've done for us."

He handed them over gently, and Ms. Davis took them graciously. Holding them gently, pink roses and purple lilacs, amongst others, rustled quietly against the plastic. The beautiful bouquet sat in her arms, flowers speaking in their colors.

"George is in another room doing some work right now, so he's sorry he couldn't give them to you directly. But, he still wanted me to tell you that he's grateful for your help."

Ms. Davis gave an understanding chuckle, looking down at the flowers fondly. "And we both know that George isn't exactly one for words, now is he?"

"No, he's really not, is he?" Dream gave out a guilty chuckle. "But seriously, we both really appreciate everything you've done for us. Especially this year. Neither of us have any idea how you put up with us."

"Oh, come on now," Ms. Davis laughed, "All I did was fill in a couple of papers saying I was watching you two responsibly. It was *your* willingness and hard work that made this year happen."

"Well, thank you either way. From George too."

"Of course," she said, clapping him on his shoulder. "Thank you so much for the flowers." She gives a gentle smile. "They're beautiful."

Turning to leave, Dream gave his gratitude again. "Have a good day Ms. Davis."

"You too."

Just as he was at the doorway, Ms. Davis called, "Oh, and Clay?"

"Yeah Ms. Davis?"

"Treat George well, alright?"

Whipping his head around, Dream barely sputtered. "What?"

Shuffling around to face her, Ms. Davis took off her glasses and tilted her head slightly.

Setting down the flowers gently, she asked, "Oh, was I wrong?"

He gave a nervous laugh. "About what?"

"Aren't you two together?" She said bluntly.

It drew a sputter, and eventually he strung together words. “Wh—How did you know?” he managed.

She took a pause, pursing her lips a slight bit. “I think I just knew,” she shrugged, a smile donning her face, partially unreadable.

It felt unusual.

“Just,” she gave a gentle nod, “I believe George is in good hands, right?”

Dream could barely nod back.

“Make sure he doesn’t do anything to stupid, you hear me?” She said with a joking side-eye.

“I won’t.” He felt it come out too quickly, as if he was being interrogated.

“And I’m sure he’ll watch over you too.”

“George is the one that normally does the stupid stuff,” he muttered.

“Ah,” She gave a doubtful hum, “I wouldn’t be too sure about that.”

Dream opened his mouth to retort, but Ms. Davis continued.

Giving a playful sigh, “I really hope you two are happy.”

In the setting spring sun, rays of gold coated her gentle smile—one that spoke of true words and genuine wishes. Sitting from her desk, Ms. Davis filled Dream’s heart with warmth.

Dream could feel himself glow. “Thank you Ms. Davis.”

As he passed the doorway and walked through the hallways, he felt himself smile.

At his car was George, leaning on the side of the passenger seat as protection from the light winds outside.

“Been waiting long?” Dream asked, unlocking the car.

“Not too long,” George slipped in, “Mr. Burton’s test was longer than I thought it’d be.”

Inside, George shuffled his backpack into the back row. “Did she like the flowers?”

“She did, a lot. I think,” Dream buckled his seat belt.

“That’s good.”

Dream glanced over, and he caught the barest smile on George’s face.

Turning on the car and making their way down roads, George chuckled out.

“What?” Dream asked.

“You’ve been smiling this whole time,” Dream caught George’s grin out of the corner of his eye.

“Why?”

His heart tugged and pulled at the sight. Dream doesn’t think he’ll ever get used to it. Thinking of responses, he laughed and said, “It’s because I get to see you.”

George sputtered and scrunched his eyebrows. “Yeah right.”

“I’m not lying!”

“You absolutely are.”

“Am not.”

“Are to.”

On and on they bickered, all the way to George’s house. Watching George leave, Dream could only smile and think to himself:

We are happy Ms. Davis—We really are.

“You still up?”

No response.

The two were curled into each other on Dream’s sofa in his living room watching the entire “Indiana Jones” series on DVD. Underneath blankets and on pillows, they were buried in warm fabrics. Sprawled across Dream’s right side, George lightly snored into his sweatshirt, having fallen asleep not too soon after the third movie played.

Barely feeling the rise and fall of his chest, Dream let his eyes rest on George’s face.

Slightly illuminated by the TV, George was so beautiful. Handsome. Pretty. Everything.

Dream let his hand wander into George’s hair, letting his fingers get lost in the sprawl of brown tangles.

His left hand instinctively reached for George’s right, resting lightly on Dream’s chest. Laying it atop smooth knuckles, Dream leaned into George’s touch. Letting his mind wander, he sighed quietly as he let his head fall back.

They’d seen each other more often once summer came around, no longer burdened by textbooks and worksheets.

Movie theaters, aquariums, planetariums, zoos—Dream wanted to do it all with George.

And shamelessly, he did. They’d seen awfully predictable horror films, beautiful fish basking in blue waters, outlines of stars from within replicated telescopes, and playful animals roaming in green grasses.

Pulling him by the hand, Dream took George everywhere.

Sometimes George would protest—giving into laziness to stay home—leaving the two to play video games at home or nap until 9:00 (A.M. or P.M., George would fall asleep at any time).

Screaming at their screens, they’d play all sorts of games together, getting competitive every time.

Naps would take place whenever George felt like it, ultimately ruining Dream's ability to sleep that night. As soon as he was tugged down and George ensnared him in blankets, Dream was fucked to lay there and sleep, not wanting to disturb George in the slightest.

Even so, Dream enjoyed all of it.

Every moment was snapshotted and pressed into his memory, emotions held dearly in each photo. All of them were with George, and there was nothing more that Dream could ask for.

With every time they met, their hands would find each other without any words. Interlocking with an almost clearly sounding click, it's like they were made for each other. Dream doesn't think he'd ever get tired of seeing their fingers intertwined, gentle and caring.

Sitting in the dark living room, Dream pressed a kiss into George's hair.

He couldn't help the smile that stretched on his face, fond in the light of the TV.

Resting his head against George's, Dream let his eyes close, nothing more than he and George in that very moment.

Tapping his pencil against his lips, George plucked it away from Dream's hands.

"Alright, I'll bite. Why're you so stressed?"

Looking up from his paper, Dream pursed his lips, a little numb from mindlessly bouncing the pencil against his mouth. "I was just distracted. Or something."

"Codeworld?"

"I think."

Together, they were in Dream's room, George sprawled on his bed scrolling through Netflix and Dream tucked at his desk.

Swinging his legs around, George shuffled up and gently grabbed the paper. Landing back on the bed, he skimmed through the scrawled writing, ideas written out messily with lines drawn through them.

"What's the theme this year? Or the topic? I haven't looked at the website just yet."

"Something about old ideas coming anew."

"Hm, really," George tried thinking back. "Didn't they use that one a few years back?"

Dream turned his chair to look at George. "Yeah, they reuse the yearly themes every now and then."

"Well I think these are pretty good," George gestured to the paper, "if I'm being honest."

"Really?"

George smiled at him. “Yes, really.”

Casting his eyes aside, Dream muttered as he pulled up his knees. “I dunno. Maybe I’m just too stressed about this.”

Sighing playfully, George sat up straighter and took Dream’s hands. “We have almost another month before school starts again. I say, and this is coming from me, that we chill out for a while.”

“But I—“

“No buts, Dream. We have enough time to think about this another day, right?”

“I guess.”

“Not ‘I guess.’ I know we do.”

Dream still pursed his lips.

“We can work on it together. It’ll be easier now that we aren’t always arguing with each other, right?”

Laughing a little, Dream thought back to years’ past. “It will be, huh?”

“Yeah it sure as hell will.”

Dream smiled at George, and he leaned forward, setting his forehead on his shoulder.

“Now come on, you weirdo,” George laughed, nudging Dream off his shoulder. “I found a pretty good show to watch.”

George dragged him up, Dream following after George’s light steps to the living room.

“What’s it called?”

“*The Queen’s Gambit.*”

“What’s it about?”

“Something about this girl playing chess,” George grabbed blankets and cups of water. “And it looks really interesting.”

“Mm, does it now?” Dream asked, switching on the TV.

George took the controller, flitting through channels. “It does. You could learn something from her.”

“I’ll have you know that I’m a genius chess player already. A prodigy, really.”

George scoffed as he sat down, shuffling around to get comfortable. “Say that when you don’t lose twenty times in a row.”

“I’m getting better.”

“Yeah, at the speed my grandma would.”

Dream just frowned, looking straight at George. Smiling, George poked his tongue out jokingly. “Don’t be salty just because you’re bad.”

Kissing his smug smile right off of his face, Dream settled his arm around George and buried himself under blankets. "Shut up," he mumbled.

George just snickered, fabric shifting underneath Dream's arms.

Flicking on the first episode, the two shuffled around once more and finally settled in. By hours the afternoon passed, the two talking and laughing within the living room as the episodes reeled by.

Soft kisses were pressed into entangled hands and gentle whispers were heard when times became drowsy.

Together, they soaked in each other's presence, enjoying the company of the other to the fullest.

"I love you."

There's a pause, and George speaks in a whisper. "You mean it?"

There's no hesitation. "Of course I do. I think I really, really do."

Dark fills the silence, shreds of light barely filtering in. The room is quiet, leaving only their thoughts to be illuminated in the barest bit of sense.

"I do too."

They become quiet again, blending with the room in its simple, solid colors.

Scrolling through Twitter, it was a sunny afternoon at George's house.

Laying flat on his bed, George was settled against his pillows with Dream sitting against the wall, their legs crossed in an X. Feeling himself become drowsy, George put down his phone, glancing up for the first time in a while.

Sunlight filtered in at a beautiful angle, plastering Dream's side in a golden yellow. Pretty eyelashes and lips glinted back at George, making him smile in a fond thought.

"What's up?" Dream asked, noticing his staring.

George shifted over, their shoulders now touching. "Nothing," He mumbled.

"If you say so."

Together they sat there, and, eventually, Dream fell asleep, head resting on George's. Soft breathing echoed throughout the room, blending in with the soft yellows of the walls.

As Dream's chest rose and fell in slow strides, George intertwined their hands gently, slipping his fingers in between his loosely. He could barely glance up, a fear of waking Dream up stopping his

movements.

So, he sat there, filtered sun laid out upon his chest and legs as Dream slept soundly against him.

Eventually, George gave into the weight on his eyelids, and he closed them, the lights from the sun becoming too bright for him. His mind lulled as sections of his vision spotted in purples and pinks from the sun.

He hated Dream—he truly, *truly* did for a time.

An ignorant, snobbish, egotistical, loud, annoying, dense, stubborn, enigma was what Dream was.

And for a time, George didn't think of him as anything else.

Always so reckless in his movements, and annoying in his thoughts. Outspoken and egotistical, Dream's ideas were always "right". They just had to be. Like a rock in his shoe, Dream would jab and poke away until George had to acknowledge him begrudgingly, barely sparing a full glance or an inch of his thoughts.

There wasn't a shred of sympathy for the guy who called himself George's "Teammate".

But now, George can't help the thoughts that fit right next to those from before.

Attentive and kind, he would listen to George's thoughts, a swirling mess that they'd sort through together. Thoughtful and funny, he'd laugh at his jokes and with him at ones he'd found—Albeit some of them worse than others.

Dream had terrible taste in movies, but he could list out classical literature as if he were a library himself. His knowledge on animals was stupidly extensive for a very specific few, memories told to George a number of times. An affinity for logistical thinking, Dream was, however, terrible at math—Disasters with even the simplest of equations as times.

To say George had learned a lot about Dream was an understatement.

But, he appreciated Dream more than words could describe.

The sun, the moon, the sky, the stars—He was everything.

A once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon that George had so happened to meet, glinting brighter and brighter with every time they met—So bright he had to look away, yet so warm that he wanted to get closer. If counting every star in the sky meant that he would be with Dream, he'd find every star until there wasn't a speck left in the sky.

Proof of now with promises of the future, there wasn't anyone else George would want to be with.

Dream could write him symphonies, and George would give him all the stars. He'd write endless novellas, care and love so sickeningly sweet interlaced with words written in ink, and George would name constellations after him, tied by dots and plastered across the sky in his name.

History would be re-written in their hands if they wanted to.

George squeezed Dream's hand lightly, smiling to himself.

How was he supposed to hate him?

“Holy shit dude, first day of school and we’re already running late?”

“Just get in,” Dream mumbled, granola bar halfway eaten in his mouth. “My clock was set wrong.”

Sapnap scrambled in, shutting the door after him, slinging his backpack off, and buckling up as Dream began to drive. “And your phone?”

“Dead.”

Sapnap cackled, pulling out a broken pop tart from his backpack. “Of course it’s dead.”

“Shut up,” Dream mumbled, shoving down the rest of his breakfast just as the next light turned green.

“Karl!”

“Sapnap!”

The two met in a sling of arms, giggling at each other's voices. Together, they all went inside the gym, meeting for the first assembly of the new school year. Dream, filing in just after them, couldn’t spot George anywhere. Shoved in with the rest of the students, he sat with Sapnap and Karl, unable to find George amongst the rest of the crowd.

Words of administrators and student representatives went by terribly slow, words going by like molasses and announcements flowing like tar. However, before he knew it, he was off to his lunch block, first and second period having gone by in a flash.

Flitting his eyes around the lunch room, he carried his tray in one hand as he held his phone in the other. A small vibration alerted him, and he quickly checked.

12:35 P.M.

George: go to the courtyard

George: Sapnap and Karl are here already

Tucking away his phone, Dream made his way outside, easily spotting the trio at one of the lunch tables.

“God, about time Dream,” Sapnap laughed.

Slinging off his backpack and setting down his tray, Dream took a seat next to George. “Not my fault you guys didn’t tell me where we were meeting.”

Quickly, they told each other about their classes and their teachers, some worse and some better than others. Some courses were shaping up to be easier or harder than they appeared, and that meant something depending on the person.

Eventually, Karl and Sapnap fell into a small back and forth, asking about later classes with each other. Dream took the opportunity to ask George about something important for later that afternoon.

“Do you have it?” He asked, taking a bite of peaches.

“Have what?” George took a sip out of his water bottle.

“The packet.”

“Oh,” George began to reach for it, but Dream stopped him.

“No, no it’s good. I was just wondering.”

“Did you print it out?”

Dream gave a smug smile. “Of course I did? Who do you take me for, George?”

“Oh, shut up. Even if you didn’t, it’d be fine, since I made an extra copy.”

“Are you serious?” Dream laughed.

“Hey, it’s better to be careful than not at all.”

“Fair enough.”

The lunch bell rang, signaling for the end of the period. Groups of students began shuffling back into the buildings, disposing of trash and talking on their way in.

Downing the last of his milk, Dream stood up. “Alright I gotta go. My next block is all the way in South Wing. It’ll take me forever to get there if I don’t start going now.”

“Bye Dream!” Karl waved off, Sapnap following after.

“Bye Dream,” George squeezed his hand as he stood up, making him smile.

“See you after school, George.”

Throwing away his trash, Dream walked off to class, a warm feel in his heart underneath the beats of his steps.

Tapping his foot, George stood a little straighter when he saw Dream round the corner.

“You ready?” He asked.

“Of course I am,” answered George, hopefully feeling confidence in his voice.

Together, they walked through the hallways, finally arriving at a closed door. The hallways were empty, cheap lights desperately flicking for a bulb change. Even so, the sunlight that filtered in through windows made up for the lack of light.

Looking down, Dream lightly grabbed George’s arm, squeezing it in some assurance. “Don’t be so

nervous.”

“You’re one to talk,” George retorted, gesturing to his restless fingers tapping against his backpack strap.

“You being nervous makes me nervous.”

“Is that how it works?”

“Yeah.”

“Alright, then let’s be nervous together.”

“We already are.”

“Okay, then let’s stop being nervous.”

“Easier said than done.”

“It’s not like Ms. Davis is gonna hate our ideas.”

“I know that.”

“And we worked hard on it together.”

“Yeah.”

“So it’ll be fine.”

“I know.”

“Dream, take a breath.”

Slowly, Dream did, George following suit. He squeezed his hand gently, earning one back.

“It’s gonna be fine,” Dream said, voice wavering and then evening out.

George echoed it back. “It’s gonna be fine.”

“You ready?” Dream looked at him, and George felt his heart squeeze, a golden smile seeping into his heart and washing away his nerves.

He nodded, and puffed in light confidence. “As ready as I’ll ever be.”

With that, they opened the door—ready to take on CodeWorld again, together.

Chapter End Notes

oh my god its over

long, sappy notes ahead so if u don't wanna read, u can skip to the bottom (*) :]

I want to say, first off, that i am so, so grateful for the support you guys have shown me. I started off writing this on a whim, and PURELY for self satisfaction. I didn't have a real plot, and (if you couldn't tell) this whole thing is just freeform!! I remember getting like, 4 comments on my first chapter and deciding to follow through with it. And then, more, and more, and more of u guys kept coming until I've gotten to what, 21k hits?

There were a lot of moments where I just had writer's block, and didn't update for weeks at a time (this chapter being a pure example of that). But your guys' support and comments kept me going!! I re-read them a lot and they always bring a smile to my face :)

Seeing tweets and tiktoks and just posts in general promoting this fic has made me so happy on so many occasions!! (to anyone who has ever promoted my fic or just recommended it to someone, it means the world to me. Seriously, thank you so, so much)

This was my first ever, multi-chaptered fic that i followed through with, and that I now have the pleasure of ending.

*So for all the marvels and everything else, thank you for the support. And thank you for following me through this hell of a ride <3

See you around, or maybe not :0

Follow my twt if u wanna see more fics from me or just interact with me in general!
twt: [@aloffie](#)

And as always, any questions, criticisms, or comments are absolutely appreciated <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!